

Official Report of the
One Hundred Fifty-eighth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 1 and 2, 1988

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THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-EIGHTH SEMIANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 158th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 1988, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 1 and 2, 1988. The general priesthood session was held in the Tabernacle on Saturday, October 1, 1988, at 6:00 P.M.

President Ezra Taft Benson presided at all sessions of the conference. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations carried portions or all of some of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

The First Presidency: Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott

The Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy: Dean L. Larsen, Marion D. Hanks, Wm. Grant Bangerter, Robert L. Backman, Hugh W. Pinnock, James M. Paramore, and J. Richard Clarke

Additional Members of the First Quorum of the Seventy: Theodore M. Burton, Paul H. Dunn, Hartman Rector, Jr., Loren C. Dunn, Robert L. Simpson, Rex D. Pinegar, J. Thomas Fyans, Adney Y. Komatsu, Gene R. Cook, Charles Didier, William R. Bradford, George P. Lee, Carlos E. Asay, John H. Groberg, Jacob de Jager, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Royden G. Derrick, Robert E. Wells, F. Enzio Busche,¹ Ronald E. Poelman, Derek A. Cuthbert, Rex C. Reeve, Sr., F. Burton Howard, Ted E. Brewerton, Jack H. Goaslind, Angel Abrea, John K. Carmack, Russell C. Taylor, Robert B. Harbertson, Devere Harris, Spencer H. Osborn, Philip T. Sonntag, John Sonnenberg, F. Arthur Kay, Keith W. Wilcox, Victor L. Brown, H. Burke Peterson, Hans B. Ringger, Waldo P. Call, Helio da Rocha Camargo, H. Verlan Andersen, George I. Cannon, Francis M. Gibbons, Gardner H. Russell, George R. Hill III, John R. Lasater, Douglas J. Martin, Alexander B. Morrison, L. Aldin Porter, Glen L. Rudd, Douglas H. Smith, Lynn A. Sorensen, Robert E. Sackley, L. Lionel Kendrick, Monte J. Brough, Albert Choules, Jr., Lloyd P. George, and Gerald E. Melchin

The Presiding Bishopric: Robert D. Hales, Henry B. Eyring, and Glenn L. Pace

General Authorities Emeritus: Eldred G. Smith, Sterling W. Sill, Bernard P. Brockbank, and Joseph Anderson²

¹Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi was away presiding over the Hawaii Honolulu Mission.

²Elder John H. Vandenberg was excused due to ill health.

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included Regional Representatives, presidents of stakes and their counselors, presidents of temples, bishops of wards, presidencies and members of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood quorums.

Many general, stake, and ward auxiliary officers also attended.

FIRST DAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 158th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 1988, at 10:00 A.M. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music for the opening session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

Before the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "Oh Say, What Is Truth?" without announcement.

President Hinckley made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 158th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked me to conduct this session.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Robert L. Backman and Ted E. Brewerton are seated on the stand. We welcome also the many others who are receiving these conference proceedings

by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi, who is serving as president of the Hawaii Honolulu Mission, and Elder John H. Vandenberg. We also acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened this session by singing "Oh Say, What Is Truth?" The chorus will now favor us with "How Lovely Are the Messengers."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder William R. Bradford, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "How Lovely Are the Messengers."

Elder William R. Bradford offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We will now be privileged to listen to President Ezra Taft Benson, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Ezra Taft Benson

My beloved brethren and sisters, I rejoice to be with you in another glorious general conference of the Church. I am always filled with great anxiety as I approach these conferences. But I humbly pray that the Holy Spirit will be with us in rich abundance as we listen to the inspired counsel and messages of the Lord.

Landmark use of the Book of Mormon

This has been a landmark year in the history of the Church in the use of the keystone of our religion—the Book of Mormon. This sacred volume of scripture has brought more souls to Christ, both within and without the Church, than ever before.

There are so many who could be commended for this progress, but time will permit mention of only a few.

We commend all those who had a part in producing and distributing the Church video on the Book of Mormon entitled *How Rare a Possession*. That video has had a powerful impact in the lives of its viewers, and tens of thousands of copies were distributed in the first weeks after its initial showing.

We commend you leaders and teachers of the various Church organizations for your inspired use of the Book of Mormon in helping to rear a generation that can redeem Zion. In many cases a little child has led a parent to the Lord through the Book of Mormon reading program in the Primary.

We commend the members of the Church who have participated in the family-to-family Book of Mormon program, placing their pictures and testimonies inside copies of the Book of Mormon. These testimonies have been translated into many languages, and the books have been given away by our missionaries around the world. This is helping to bring in tens of thousands of converts each year.

We commend those responsible for the excellent articles on the Book of

Mormon which have appeared in our Church publications.

We commend the personnel of radio stations who broadcast excerpts from the Book of Mormon.

We commend those who have sponsored and supported faith-building Book of Mormon lectures and symposiums.

We commend many of you who in an edifying manner have taught classes, given talks, authored articles, and written books on the Book of Mormon.

And finally and most important, we commend that vast number of faithful Saints who individually and as families are changing their lives, cleansing the inner vessel, through the daily reading of the Book of Mormon.

Book of Mormon must be central

The Book of Mormon is the instrument that God designed to “sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out [His] elect” (Moses 7:62). This sacred volume of scripture needs to become more central in our preaching, our teaching, and our missionary work.

At present, the Book of Mormon is studied in our Sunday School and seminary classes every fourth year. This four-year pattern, however, must *not* be followed by Church members in their personal and family study. We need to read daily from the pages of the book that will get a man “nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (*History of the Church*, 4:461).

And when we are called upon to study or teach other scriptures, we need to strengthen that undertaking by frequent reference to the additional insights which the Book of Mormon may provide on the subject (see 1 Nephi 13:40, 2 Nephi 3:12).

The recent, well-done video on the Book of Mormon entitled *How Rare a Possession* carried many messages. First was the power of the Book of Mormon to convert men to Christ and hence to His church. Another message was that a man could study and preach the contents of the

Book of Mormon for so many years without either his or his associates' knowing the name of the book or the Church which published it.

Flood the earth with the Book of Mormon

The time is long overdue for a massive flooding of the earth with the Book of Mormon for the many reasons which the Lord has given. In this age of the electronic media and the mass distribution of the printed word, God will hold us accountable if we do not now move the Book of Mormon in a monumental way.

We have the Book of Mormon, we have the members, we have the missionaries, we have the resources, and the world has the need.

The time is now!

My beloved brothers and sisters, we hardly fathom the power of the Book of Mormon, nor the divine role it must yet play, nor the extent to which it must be moved.

"Few men on earth," said Elder Bruce R. McConkie, "either in or out of the Church, have caught the vision of what the Book of Mormon is all about. Few are they among men who know the part it has played and will yet play in preparing the way for the coming of Him of whom it is a new witness. . . . The Book of Mormon shall so affect men that the whole earth and all its peoples will have been influenced and governed by it. . . . There is no greater issue ever to confront mankind in modern times than this: Is the Book of Mormon the mind and will and voice of God to all men?" We testify that it is. (*The Millennial Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982], pp. 159, 170, 179.)

Now, my good Saints, we have a great work to perform in a very short time. We must flood the earth with the Book of Mormon—and get out from under God's condemnation for having treated it lightly (see D&C 84:54–58).

Challenges to Church members

I challenge the members of the Church to participate in the family-to-

family Book of Mormon program—to send copies of the Book of Mormon on a mission for you. Sister Benson and I have been doing this for some time now, and we intend to do more. We should be sending out millions of copies of the Book of Mormon to the missionaries every month.

I challenge our mission leaders to show their missionaries how to challenge their contacts to read the Book of Mormon and pray about it. Missionaries need to know how to use the Book of Mormon to arouse mankind's interest in studying it, and they need to show how it answers the great questions of the soul. Missionaries need to read with those they teach various passages from the Book of Mormon on gospel subjects.

I challenge our Church writers, teachers, and leaders to tell us more Book of Mormon conversion stories that will strengthen our faith and prepare great missionaries. Show us how to effectively use it as a missionary tool, and let us know how it leads us to Christ and answers our personal problems and those of the world.

I challenge those who are in business and other professions to see that there are copies of the Book of Mormon in their reception rooms.

I challenge owners of cassette players to play Book of Mormon cassettes from time to time and to listen to them at home and while walking, jogging, or driving.

I challenge the homes of Israel to display on their walls great quotations and scenes from the Book of Mormon.

I challenge all of us to prayerfully consider steps that we can personally take to bring this new witness for Christ more fully into our own lives and into a world that so desperately needs it.

A vision

I have a vision of homes alerted, of classes alive, and of pulpits aflame with the spirit of Book of Mormon messages.

I have a vision of home teachers and visiting teachers, ward and branch officers, and stake and mission leaders counseling our people out of the most correct

of any book on earth—the Book of Mormon.

I have a vision of artists putting into film, drama, literature, music, and paintings great themes and great characters from the Book of Mormon.

I have a vision of thousands of missionaries going into the mission field with hundreds of passages memorized from the Book of Mormon so that they might feed the needs of a spiritually famished world.

I have a vision of the whole Church getting nearer to God by abiding by the precepts of the Book of Mormon.

Indeed, I have a vision of flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon.

An absolute need

My beloved Saints, I am now entering my ninetieth year. I am getting older and less vigorous and am so grateful for your prayers and for the support of my younger Brethren. I thank the Lord for renewing my body from time to time so that I can still help build His kingdom.

I do not know fully why God has preserved my life to this age, but I do know this: That for the present hour He has revealed to me the absolute need for us to move the Book of Mormon forward

now in a marvelous manner. You must help with this burden and with this blessing which He has placed on the whole Church, even all the children of Zion.

Moses never entered the promised land. Joseph Smith never saw Zion redeemed. Some of us may not live long enough to see the day when the Book of Mormon floods the earth and when the Lord lifts His condemnation (see D&C 84:54–58). But, God willing, I intend to spend all my remaining days in that glorious effort. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang “What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold” without announcement.

President Hinckley

It has been our privilege to listen to the opening address of our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson. Following his remarks, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang “What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Warning against drug abuse

I am impressed to speak out on a problem of deep concern—the worldwide epidemic of drug addiction. As a medical doctor, my study of drugs began early in medical school. Each doctor spends months in specialized courses learning potential benefits and risks of medicinal agents. Proper prescription of drugs is the forte of skilled physicians. Generally, when their advice is carefully followed, results are remarkably successful. In addressing this topic, I specifically exclude such application of modern knowledge by educated professionals.

But I raise my voice with others throughout the world who warn against

abuse of drugs beyond prescribed limits, and the recreational or social use of chemical substances so often begun naively by the ill-informed.

A vicious cycle

From an initial experiment thought to be trivial, a vicious cycle may follow. From trial comes a habit. From habit comes dependence. From dependence comes addiction. Its grasp is so gradual. Enslaving shackles of habit are too small to be sensed until they are too strong to be broken. Indeed, drugs are the modern “mess of pottage” for which souls are sold. No families are free from risk.

But this problem is broader than hard drugs. Their use most often begins with cigarette smoking.¹ Tobacco and alcoholic beverages contain addicting drugs. They lead the list in incidence and cost to society.

As I speak with governmental and medical leaders of many nations, they voice grave concern over the consumption of alcohol and other substances by their citizens. Though the extent of the challenge is international, data from the United States of America will be cited solely to indicate the monstrous scope of this worldwide problem.

Tobacco

Consider the magnitude of tobacco's harm. Cigarette smoking is the most frequent preventable cause of heart disease,² artery disease, lung disease, and cancer.² In the USA in 1982, 16 percent of all deaths (314,000) were attributed to the smoking of tobacco.³

For the year 1985, the estimated cost of both smoking-related health care and lost productivity amounted to \$65 billion. That calculates to an average of \$2.17 per pack of cigarettes sold.⁴ Social consequences of smoking far exceed the price paid to purchase cigarettes.

An insurance company recently reported that one-fifth of all its claims were for afflictions that could have been prevented by simply not smoking.⁵ We all bear this financial burden of illness that need not be.

Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop and his team of more than fifty scientists recently published a landmark report. For the USA alone, they attributed 320,000 deaths annually to tobacco, 125,000 to alcohol, and lesser mortality to cocaine (2,000) and other opioids (4,000). They declared nicotine to be a powerfully addicting drug in the same sense as are drugs such as heroin and cocaine.⁶ Comparable views have been recorded by medical authorities in many other nations.⁷ Yet many of our good friends who use tobacco may not believe it to be addicting. Some are reluctant to admit that their behavior is substantially

controlled by a drug. We understand those feelings.

Alcohol

There is mounting concern worldwide over the consumption of alcohol. The U.S. government estimates that 10.6 million adults are alcoholics and that one family in four is troubled by alcohol.⁸ It is a factor in half of all the nation's traffic deaths.⁹

Last year, a tragic milestone was reached. More Americans had been killed from alcohol-related motor vehicle accidents (1,350,000) than had been killed in all the wars America has ever fought (1,156,000).¹⁰

Other drugs

Drugs such as LSD, marijuana, heroin, and cocaine are also endangering people throughout the earth. The noble attributes of reason, integrity, and dignity, which distinguish men and women from all other forms of life, are often the first to be attacked by these drugs and alcohol.

We reach out in love to family, friends, and neighbors, regardless of nationality or creed, who suffer addiction. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continues to help relieve this international plague.

Importance of understanding agency

The solution to this problem ultimately is neither governmental nor institutional. Nor is it a question of legality. It is a matter of individual choice and commitment. Agency must be understood. The importance of the will in making crucial choices must be known. Then steps toward relief can follow.

Agency, or the power to choose, was ours as spirit children of our Creator before the world was (see Alma 13:3, Moses 4:4). It is a gift from God, nearly as precious as life itself.

Often, however, agency is misunderstood. While we are free to choose, once we have made those choices, we are tied to the consequences of those choices.

We are free to take drugs or not. But once we choose to use a habit-forming drug, we are bound to the consequences of that choice. Addiction surrenders later freedom to choose. Through chemical means, one can literally become disconnected from his or her own will!

Road to recovery

For relief of an ailment, as a doctor of medicine I might write a prescription. As an ordained Apostle, I would invoke the spiritual blessing of eternal perspective. Combined, my spiritual prescription would return the gift of agency to its rightful owner.

Each one who resolves to climb that steep road to recovery must gird up for the fight of a lifetime. But a lifetime is a prize well worth the price.

This challenge uniquely involves the will, and the will can prevail. Healing doesn't come after the first dose of any medicine. So the prescription must be followed firmly, bearing in mind that it often takes as long to recover as it did to become ill. But if made consistently and persistently, correct choices can cure.

Spiritual prescription

My spiritual prescription includes six choices which I shall list alphabetically, A through F, and then comment about each:

- Choose to be alive
- Choose to believe
- Choose to change
- Choose to be different
- Choose to exercise
- Choose to be free

1. Choose to be alive. Seek beloved family, friends, and physicians. Plead for their help. Your precious life is at stake. Cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life (see 2 Nephi 10:23).

The choice for life brings an outlook of optimism. It breathes hope. It rekindles self-esteem—regarding one's body as a timeless trust. And it awakens a personal

commitment to "see that ye take care of these sacred things, . . . that ye look to God and live" (Alma 37:47).

2. Choose to believe. Believe in God. Accept yourself as His child, created in His image. He loves you and wants you to be happy. He wants you to grow through life's choices and become more like Him. He pleads that you will "reconcile [yourself] to the will of God, and not to the will of the . . . flesh" (2 Nephi 10:24).

Reconciliation requires faith, repentance, and baptism. Be "born of God, changed from [your] carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness" (Mosiah 27:25). Renew covenants made at baptism by worthily partaking of the sacrament regularly, "that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world" (D&C 59:9).

Then "be meek and lowly in heart; . . . withstand every temptation of the devil, with . . . faith on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Alma 37:33).

Choose to believe in and be blessed by your Creator.

3. Choose to change. "How long will ye suffer [yourself] to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light?" (Helaman 13:29). Choose to change—today!

"The spirit and the body are the soul of man" (D&C 88:15). Both spirit and body have appetites. One of life's great challenges is to develop dominance of spiritual appetites over those that are physical. Your willpower becomes strong when joined with the will of the Lord.

Addiction to any substance enslaves not only the physical body but the spirit as well. Therefore, repentance is best achieved while one still has a body to help attain spiritual supremacy:

"This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; . . . this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

" . . . Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance; . . . if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. . . .

"That same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life . . . will have power to possess your body in that eternal world" (Alma 34:32-34).

"To be carnally-minded is death, [but] to be spiritually-minded is life eternal" (2 Nephi 9:39; see also Romans 8:6). That blessing will come to those with the will to change.

4. Choose to be different. Distinguish yourself from worldly crowds. Defenders do not resemble offenders. Among them are clever merchandisers who plot to link beer with sports, tobacco with charm, and drugs with fun. Scripture warns of those who so deceive:

"Thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation" (D&C 89:4).

His Word of Wisdom includes sound nutritional guidance and simple instructions. We are not to drink alcoholic beverages (see D&C 89:5-7). We are not to use tobacco (see D&C 89:8). We are not to drink tea or coffee (see D&C 89:9). And in this same spirit, we are not to use addicting drugs.¹¹

So to modern Israel, God has given modern counsel, similar to ancient commandments recorded in the Old Testament:

"It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:

"Lest they drink, and forget the law" (Proverbs 31:4-5).

"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken" (Habakkuk 2:15; see also Proverbs 20:1).

Certainly modern medical research validates the physical benefits of obedience to the Word of Wisdom. The evidence is so great that many will be taught the right things for only half of the right reasons. With that limited understanding, could they then try a smoke, a drink, or a drug, rationalizing that "just one won't hurt?" Could the prospect of only future physical rewards even be bait for foolish

dares of defiance now? Or to phrase these questions another way, how many would be *determined* to obey the will of the Lord even if physical benefits were *not* assured? When God asked Abraham to offer Isaac in sacrifice, did they first seek scientific confirmation that their choice to obey was medically advisable?

The Word of Wisdom is a spiritual law. To the obedient He proclaimed, "I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (D&C 89:21).

At the first passover, the destroying angel did pass over houses that were marked with blood on the doorposts. In our day, the faithful keep the Word of Wisdom. It is one of our signs unto God that we are His covenant people.

Choose to be different; you will be blessed both physically and spiritually.

5. Choose to exercise. Exercising the body and the spirit will aid in the climb toward recovery. Appropriate physical activity helps to combat depression, which so often accompanies addiction.

But spiritual exercise is even more crucial. This battle will be more easily won with fervent prayer. If we truly "counsel with the Lord in all [our] doings, . . . he will direct [us] for good" (Alma 37:37).

Strength comes from uplifting music, good books, and feasting from the scriptures. Since the Book of Mormon was to come forth "when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth" (Mormon 8:31), study of that book in particular will fortify us. President Benson has issued that challenge.

Exercise the body and the spirit and choose to exercise faith in God.

6. Choose to be free. Break "bands of iniquity" (Mosiah 23:12; see also 1 Nephi 13:5). Leave behind "an iron yoke, . . . handcuffs, and chains, and shackles, and fetters of hell" (D&C 123:8).

Choose to be free from feigned friends who first flatter yet later despise (see D&C 121:20). Drug abuse may have started with them, but you pay the price.

"Remember, my brethren [and sisters], that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free" (Helaman 14:30).

The Lord has revealed His sacred standard to guide people in a troubled world. You and I were born free to follow His divine guidance. We may choose for ourselves. Those choices may bring addiction or freedom. For freedom and joy, choose to "be faithful in Christ." He will lift you up. May "the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever" (Moroni 9:25), I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *The Health Consequences of Smoking: Nicotine Addiction*, Public Health Service [U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988], pp. 262-63.

2. *Cigarette Smoking and Cardiovascular Disease 1985: Special Report to the Public*, American Heart Association (50-075-A).

3. Office of Technology Assessment, U.S. Congress Staff Memorandum, Sept. 1985, p. 2.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

5. *Utah Hospital Leaders Digest*, 15 July 1988, p. 2.

6. *The Health Consequences of Smoking: Nicotine Addiction*, Public Health Service [U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988], pp. 14, 334.

7. Among them are Nigel Gray, director, Anti-Cancer Council, Victoria, Australia; David Simpson, director, Action on Smoking

and Health, U.K.; Pamela Taylor, spokesperson, British Medical Association, U.K.; Andrew Pipe, University of Ottawa Heart Institute, Canada; Roberta Ferrence, Addiction Research Foundation, Canada; Bernie McKay, secretary, Commonwealth Department of Health, Australia. *Times and Seasons*, Documentary on Tobacco, July 1988.

8. "Coming to Grips with Alcoholism," *U.S. News and World Report*, 30 Nov. 1987, pp. 56-57.

9. *Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention*, Public Health Service [U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979], p. 125.

10. *Accident Facts*, Annual Report of the National Safety Council, 1975, confirmed by telephone conversation 20 July 1988.

11. Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, April 1983, pp. 69-72; or *Ensign*, May 1983, pp. 54-55. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, p. 8; or *Ensign*, May 1974, p. 7. Joseph Fielding Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 47; or *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 49. Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., David O. McKay, "Message of the First Presidency," in Conference Report, Oct. 1942, pp. 8-10.

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

The chorus and congregation will now join in singing "Praise to the Man." After this, Bishop Robert D. Hales, Presiding Bishop of the Church, will address us.

The chorus and congregation sang "Praise to the Man."

Bishop Robert D. Hales

How to make good choices

The scriptures teach us that an important part of mortal probation will be making the right choices. How do we make the right choices when there are so

many temptations and so many people telling us what they think we should do with our lives?

There are three important elements that will allow us to make good decisions:

First, we must have an eternal *plan* with objectives that we are committed to achieve.

Second, we need to *study and pray* on a daily basis about our decisions for feelings of spiritual guidance, courage, and commitment.

And third, we need to *examine our motives* each time we make a decision.

Have an eternal plan

We need an eternal plan. Life's plan and the challenge to be successful are demonstrated in an Aesop Fable, "The Man, the Boy, and the Donkey." The objective of the man and the boy was to journey to the city marketplace and sell the donkey for winter provisions. As they started to town, the father rode the donkey. In the first village, the villagers said, "What an inconsiderate man, riding the donkey and making his son walk!" So the father got off the donkey and let his son ride.

In the next hamlet, the people whispered, "What an inconsiderate boy, riding the donkey and making his father walk!"

In frustration, the father climbed on the donkey; and father and son rode the donkey, only to have the people in the next town declare, "How inconsiderate of the man and the boy to overload their beast of burden and treat him in such an inhumane manner!"

In compliance with the dissident voices and mocking fingers, the father and son both got off the donkey to relieve the animal's burden, only to have the next group of onlookers say, "Can you imagine a man and a boy being so stupid as to not even use their beast of burden for what it was created?"

Then, in anger and total desperation, having tried to please all those who offered advice, the father and son both rode the donkey until it collapsed. The donkey had to be carried to the marketplace. The donkey could not be sold. The people in the marketplace scoffed, "Who wants a worthless donkey that can't even walk into the city!"

The father and son had failed in their goal of selling the donkey and had no

money to buy the winter provisions they needed in order to survive.

How much different the outcome would have been if the father and son had had a plan to follow. Father could have said, "I'll ride the donkey one-third of the way; Son, you ride the donkey one-third of the way; and we'll both walk the last third of the way. The donkey will arrive at the marketplace fresh and strong, ready to be sold."

Then, as they received confusing advice while traveling through each hamlet and village along their way to the city, they could look at each other, give a reassuring wink of the eye, and say, "We have a plan."

Eternal life is our goal

Indeed, you and I have a plan to guide us in our lives—the eternal plan that was given to us in the premortal world and that will bring us back into the presence of our Heavenly Father. During our mortal probation on earth, we will be tested with enticements and opposition in all things. But if we are obedient and faithful to the laws, ordinances, and covenants which we accept with our free agency, of our own free will and choice, we can attain eternal life.

To attain eternal life is why we came to earth. Eternal life is our goal. The definition of eternal life is to be able to live in the presence of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ with our families for all eternity.

Every time we make choices in our lives, we should weigh the ultimate effect our decisions will have on our goal of attaining eternal life.

Study and pray

That is why we must study and pray. Having the eternal plan as a goal in our lives, we will make eternal choices. However, we will not make the right eternal choices based solely on our pure intellectual deduction and factual analysis from our own understanding: Prayer and study must be used together to build knowledge and wisdom.

First, we start with the intelligence with which we were born. To our intelligence we add knowledge as we search for answers, study, and educate ourselves. To our knowledge we add experience, which should lead us to a level of wisdom. In addition to our wisdom, we add the help of the Holy Ghost through our prayers of faith, asking for spiritual guidance and strength. Then, and only then, do we reach an understanding in our hearts—which motivates us to “do what is right; let the consequence follow” (*Hymns* [1985], no. 237). The feelings of an understanding heart give us the sweet spirit of assurance of not only knowing but doing what is right no matter what the circumstances. The understanding in our hearts comes from a close interdependence of study and prayer.

“Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

“But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right” (D&C 9:7–8).

After we have attained knowledge and understanding, it is important to feel that our decision is right. Then when we act, we will do what is right.

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding” (*Proverbs* 3:13).

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” in your heart (*Proverbs* 4:7).

Stories about prayer

Last Saturday, I had the experience of visiting Joe and Linda in their home in Boise, Idaho. They gave me permission to share their story with you in the hope that it might help someone who had to make a similar decision in his or her life. About three to four years ago, Joe was an alcoholic. Linda, while she did not drink, was codependent emotionally on the

behavior of an alcoholic husband. She was nearing a nervous breakdown. She had made the decision to save herself and the children from the manipulative behavior of a husband suffering from alcoholism. So she left home, taking the children, except for a fourteen-year-old son.

Joe related to me the depression and despair he felt the night Linda left him. Somewhere in the middle of the night, about 2:00 or 3:00 A.M., Joe awoke. He reached out in prayer to his Heavenly Father and prayed until dawn. It was his Gethsemane. He cried out to the Lord and asked for help with his affliction and expressed love for his caring wife, who had confronted him with his abusive behavior.

When Joe arose in the early morning light, he made a commitment not to take another drink of alcohol. Joe has lived up to that commitment. His testimony as he talks with others in Alcoholics Anonymous is that God lives and answers prayers.

There is another story about a little boy named Josh who was having terrible nightmares that were frightening him. He asked his father to kneel down and have a prayer with him to ask Heavenly Father to stop the dreams and nightmares.

Josh opened his prayer by thanking Heavenly Father for the blessings that were his. He then asked his Heavenly Father to have the nightmares stop and send him a confirmation through his feelings during the prayer. He said no more. He waited about a minute, said “thank you,” and closed the prayer. He had had his confirmation and comfort that his prayers were answered—that he would not have any more nightmares. What an important lesson for a young man to learn!

Each time a stake president is chosen, members of the Council of the Twelve and the First Quorum of the Seventy have feelings similar to those Josh and Joe had. What an important lesson to learn about prayer and the feelings of reassurance that come when we ask in faith, with nothing wavering (see James 1:6), as the Prophet Joseph did!

Seek wise counsel

Along with study and prayer, we must seek wise counsel.

"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels" (Proverbs 1:5).

When seeking wise counsel, turn to those who have exhibited obedience to the commandments and willingness to follow the promptings of the Spirit in their lives.

You will know you have a true friend and counselor when the advice you are given makes it easier to live the commandments and when you are not asked to choose between a wayward friend's ways and the Lord's ways.

Even though we counsel with others, we must take the responsibility for our actions. Some try to go through life without making their own decisions and blame others when all does not go as well as expected.

As we study our problems out in our minds, patience and pondering should have an important place in our decision-making process. We should reflect on our eternal goals and not make hasty and unwise decisions.

President Joseph F. Smith gave these sobering words of advice to leaders and members of the Church to help us when making decisions. It is a statement I have had displayed in my office since becoming Presiding Bishop.

"In leaders undue impatience and a gloomy mind are almost unpardonable, and it sometimes takes almost as much courage to wait as to act. It is to be hoped, then, that the leaders of God's people, and the people themselves, will not feel that they must have at once a solution of every question that arises to disturb the even tenor of their way" (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 156).

Examine motives

And lastly, we must examine our motives. A good check and balance in decision making is to look at our motives

for making our decisions. We should ask ourselves, "Are my motives selfish, or is there charity in the decision I am about to make? Is this decision in keeping with the commandments, both in the spirit and the letter of the law? Is my decision basically right, honorable, and compatible with the golden rule? Have I considered the impact of my decision on others?"

"Let all your [decisions] be done with charity" (1 Corinthians 16:14).

Beware of fear and greed. Be aware of your true motives.

We make poor and irrational decisions if our decision is motivated by greediness: greed for monetary gain; greed that results in a conflict of interest; desire for power, titles, and recognition of men.

"He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live" (Proverbs 15:27).

Likewise, we make poor and irrational decisions if we are motivated by fear: fear of man, fear of not being popular, fear of failure, fear of public opinion.

As Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice" (1 Samuel 15:24).

The poet Robert Frost, in the poem "The Road Not Taken," gives us a vivid, visual image of standing at the crossroads of life, having to make a decision:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both . . .
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood,
and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

When we stand at the crossroads of life and must make a decision whether to go to the great and spacious building of the world's ways or to walk the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life,

we must realize that we cannot travel *both* roads—although sometimes we try. It is difficult to come back, but we can; and our greatest satisfaction will more than likely come from taking the lonelier road which is less traveled.

May the Lord bless us as we make our decisions in life to constantly keep our goal of eternal life in view. That we may study and pray each day to *know* and *understand* what is right but, more importantly, to *do* what is right; that we may have those who stand by us say, "Thee lift me, and I'll lift thee, and we'll ascend together," is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder James E. Faust

My dear brothers, sisters, and friends, sixteen years ago I was called to be a General Authority of this church, and ten years ago this conference I was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. These years have been challenging and, in many ways, difficult, but they have also been fulfilling. My wife and I have been trying humbly to serve the Lord as best we know how. We have traveled over much of the earth in my ministry. This has afforded us opportunity to bear witness of the Savior in many countries.

Testimony of Jesus Christ

During those years, having worn as a spiritual cloak the knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, I feel led today to give my personal witness concerning Jesus of Nazareth and His mission. I wish to testify of the mediation, the atonement, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I speak of these transcendent events in light of my spiritual knowledge that Jesus is the Redeemer and the Son of God. I also testify of His divinity and of those events in the office, the priesthood, the calling, and the authority of the holy Apostleship with which I and my Brethren are charged.

The chorus sang "Hallelujah" from *The Mount of Olives* without announcement.

President Hinckley

Bishop Robert D. Hales, Presiding Bishop of the Church, has spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Hallelujah" from *The Mount of Olives*.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Jesus' mediation and atonement

Through the Atonement and those singular events surrounding it, all of the terrible individual and collective sins of all mankind were taken upon the Lord's shoulders. The marvelous result of this great suffering was that He was able to redeem from physical death the believers and the obedient as well as the unbelieving and disobedient (see D&C 46:13–14, Acts 24:15, 1 Corinthians 15:22). Every person ever born or yet to be born is the beneficiary of both the mediation and the atonement of the Savior (see Alma 11:42).

The act of the Atonement is, in its simplest terms, a reconciliation of man with his God. The word *atonement* means to be at one. "It is literally *at-one-ment*" (James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924], p. 75). Because of their transgression, Adam and Eve, having chosen to leave their state of innocence (see 2 Nephi 2:23–25), were banished from the presence of God. This is referred to in Christendom as the Fall, or Adam's transgression. It is a spiritual death because Adam and Eve were separated from the presence of God and given agency "to act for themselves and not

to be acted upon" (2 Nephi 2:26). They were also given the great power of procreation, so that they could keep the commandment to "multiply, and replenish the earth" and have joy in their posterity (Genesis 1:28).

All of their posterity were likewise banished from the presence of God (see 2 Nephi 2:22–26). However, the posterity of Adam and Eve were innocent of the original sin because they had no part in it. It was therefore unfair for all of humanity to suffer eternally for the transgressions of our first parents, Adam and Eve. It became necessary to settle this injustice; hence the need for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus in His role as the Savior and Redeemer. Because of the transcendent act of the Atonement, it is possible for every soul to obtain forgiveness of sins, to have them washed away and be forgotten (see 2 Nephi 9:6–9; Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, p. 89). This forgiveness comes about, however, on condition of repentance and personal righteousness.

Immortality and eternal life

There is a distinction between immortality, or eternal existence, and eternal life, which is to have a place in the presence of God. Through the grace of Jesus Christ, immortality comes to all men, just or unjust, righteous or wicked. However, eternal life is "the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7). We obtain this great gift, according to the Lord, "if you keep my commandments and endure to the end." If we so endure, the promise is, "you shall have eternal life" (D&C 14:7).

President Joseph Fielding Smith explains: "This distinction between *eternal life*, as received by the faithful, and *immortality*, obtained by both the faithful and unfaithful, is shown in the words of the Lord to Moses: 'For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.' The conjunction clearly separates the two thoughts. It explains that the Lord is giving to the vast majority of men, those who will not be obedient, the blessing of immortality; and to those who will serve him, the blessing of eternal life" (*The*

Way to Perfection [Salt Lake City: The Genealogical Society of Utah, 1946], p. 329).

Jesus' suffering

It has been almost two thousand years since the wondrous occasion when death was conquered. We still do not know how the Savior was able to take upon Himself and bear our transgressions, our foolishness, our grief, our sorrows, and our burdens. It was indefinable and unfathomable. It was almost unbearable. The indescribable agony was so great in Gethsemane that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). The haunting cry on the cross, in a loud voice in His native Aramaic, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34) gives but a mere glimpse of His suffering and humiliation. One cannot help wondering how many of those drops of precious blood each of us may be responsible for.

Even though, as a man or a woman, we are born, live a brief moment, and then die, through the atonement of Jesus Christ we will all live after death. Through the divinity which is within us as a gift of the great Creator, we can come to complete fruition as heirs of God with eternal powers, dominions, and progression without end. Paul said this gift is a free gift (see Romans 5:15). Through the Mediation and Atonement we will be resurrected ourselves without going through any part of the atoning agony that the Son of God went through.

Jacob's teachings in the Book of Mormon further explain, "if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more" (2 Nephi 9:8).

Jesus' resurrection

The testimonies of those faithful followers who saw, heard, and touched the resurrected Lord stand uncontroverted to this day. After the crucifixion, Mary

Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome had bought sweet spices to anoint His body (see Mark 16:1).

But the devoted women were concerned as to who would roll away the great stone in front of the sepulchre. When they arrived, they found that the stone had been rolled away (see Mark 16:3-4). A great earthquake had intervened, and an angel had rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it, causing the keepers to shake with fear and become as dead men (see Matthew 28:2-4). The angel instructed the women to tell the disciples quickly of the Lord's resurrection, assuring them that "he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him" (Matthew 28:7). As they went to tell the disciples, "Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him" (Matthew 28:9).

The Apostles' transformation

During the forty days that the Savior spent with the Apostles and others, they heard and saw many unspeakable things. This special ministry changed the Apostles from an uncertain, confused, divided, and weak group into powerful witnesses of the Lord. Mark records that the Savior upbraided the eleven "because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen" (Mark 16:14).

Perhaps the Apostles should not be unduly criticized for not believing that Jesus, having been crucified and buried in a tomb, had come back to earth as a glorified being. In all human experience, this had never happened before. It was completely unprecedented. This was a different experience than the raising of Jairus' daughter (see Mark 5:22, 24, 35-43), the young man of Nain (see Luke 7:11-15), or Lazarus (see John 11:1-44). They all died again. Jesus, however, became a resurrected being. He would never die again. So it was that to the Apostles the story of Mary Magdalene and the other women who witnessed the Resurrection "seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not" (Luke 24:11).

Said President David O. McKay of this experience: "The world would never

have been stirred by men with such wavering, doubting, despairing minds as the apostles possessed on the day of the crucifixion.

"What was it that suddenly changed these disciples to confident, fearless, heroic preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ? It was the revelation that Christ had risen from the grave. His promises had been kept, his Messianic mission fulfilled. In the words of an eminent writer, 'The final and absolute seal of genuineness has been put on all his claims, and the indelible stamp of divine authority upon all his teachings. The gloom of death had been banished by the glorious light of the presence of their Risen, Glorified Lord and Savior.'

"On the evidence of these unprejudiced, unexpectant, incredulous witnesses, faith in the resurrection has its impregnabale foundation" (*Treasures of Life*, comp. Clare Middlemiss [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1962], pp. 15-16).

We should be transformed

Like the Apostles of old, this knowledge and belief should transform all of us to be confident, settled, unafraid, and at peace in our lives as followers of the divine Christ. It should help us carry all burdens, bear any sorrows, and also fully savor all joys and happiness that can be found in this life. The disciples who walked with the Savior on the road to Emmaus said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32). No wonder they entreated him, "Abide with us: for it is toward evening," and he "sat at meat with them" (Luke 24:29-30). They sought to savor those precious moments and feelings.

The vacating of the tomb transcended all other events in the history of the world, for it attested that Jesus had not died, but that death itself had been overcome.

As I have traveled over much of the earth, I have been saddened over and over again by the legions of crippled, maimed, deformed, suffering, and diminished people almost everywhere. What parent

of a special child has not agonized over the future and well-being of that child? Through the individual resurrection of each of us, there is great hope for all.

Testimonies of the Resurrection

Amulek, in the Book of Mormon, promises that following the temporal death, "the spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, . . . and we shall be brought to stand before God, . . . and have a bright recollection of all our guilt" (Alma 11:43).

The Prophet Joseph Smith stated: "I can taste the principles of eternal life, and so can you. . . . I know that when I tell you these words of eternal life . . . , you taste them, and I know that you believe them" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 355). So it is that the humblest and newest believer, the child, youth, or adult can come to have a personal conviction of the truth of eternal life.

John the Revelator "saw a new heaven and a new earth" and "heard a great voice out of heaven" (Revelation 21:1, 3). "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:7). "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Testimony comes through obedience

It is not necessary for anyone to depend continually upon the testimony of another regarding the mediation, atonement, and resurrection of Christ as our Redeemer and Savior. Each can savor the sweetness of the truths of the gospel by obedience to the principles, ordinances, and covenants.

One can still go to the Garden of Gethsemane, but the Lord Jesus cannot be found there, nor is He in the Garden

Tomb. He is not on the road to Emmaus, nor in Galilee, nor at Nazareth or Bethlehem. He must be found in one's heart. But He left us the great Comforter forever (see John 14:16) and the everlasting power of the priesthood. Of this power, Jacob, the son of Lehi, testified, "We truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea" (Jacob 4:6).

I testify that, through righteousness, this priesthood power and these supernal gifts of the Atonement and the Mediation can operate in our lives. Ultimately each of us must come to know these great spiritual truths by following the counsel of Jesus: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

Testimony and prayer

In conclusion, I wish to make a humble declaration and affirmation that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer, and the Savior of the world. I do this with all the solemnity of my soul. This testimony has come to me, not alone from a lifetime of study or from reason or logic, but more by personal revelation under the spirit of prophecy.

I pray that our Savior will heal our souls, dry our tears, and create in each of us a pure heart. I also pray that we may find shelter in the shadows of His outstretched arms and that He will be merciful and forgiving concerning our weaknesses. That He will be a father to the fatherless, and deliver to the needy according to their needs, and incline His ear to our cries, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Now We'll Sing with One Accord" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has borne eloquent testimony to us, following which

the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "Now We'll Sing with One Accord."

Elder Marvin J. Ashton, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles,

will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

Measurements

I would like to share some thoughts about measurements. A measurement is a standard by which we determine the capacity or dimension of a person or object. A measurement gives us a basis for comparison.

If I say, "She is a three-point student," you have a pretty good idea of this person's scholastic ability. A measurement may also be an estimate of what is expected.

Human measurement, of course, is subject to human fallibility. My generation, for example, was taught that a person's I.Q. was supposedly a fixed measurement of a person's capacity to learn. Such a notion is now generally discredited by the teaching profession. Interestingly, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught in the nineteenth century: "We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 51). He was obviously ahead of his time!

We also tend to evaluate others on the basis of physical, outward appearance: their "good looks," their social status, their family pedigrees, their degrees, or their economic situations.

The measure of our hearts

The Lord, however, has a different standard by which he measures a person. When it came time to choose a king to replace King Saul, the Lord gave this criterion to his prophet Samuel: "Look not

on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; . . . for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

When the Lord measures an individual, He does not take a tape measure around the person's head to determine his mental capacity, nor his chest to determine his manliness, but He measures the heart as an indicator of the person's capacity and potential to bless others.

Why the heart? Because the heart is a synonym for one's entire makeup. We often use phrases about the heart to describe the total person. Thus we describe people as being "big-hearted" or "good-hearted" or having a "heart of gold." Or we speak of people with faint hearts, wise hearts, pure hearts, willing hearts, deceitful hearts, conniving hearts, courageous hearts, cold hearts, hearts of stone, or selfish hearts.

The measure of our hearts is the measure of our total performance. As used by the Lord, the "heart" of a person describes his effort to better self, or others, or the conditions he confronts.

How do our hearts measure up?

A question I suggest to you is this: How do you measure up? Ultimately you and I will be judged not only for our actions, but also for the desires of our hearts. This truth was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith at a time when he was shown in vision the celestial kingdom. The revelation is recorded in section 137 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Joseph marveled when he saw his deceased brother Alvin in the celestial kingdom, for Alvin had died before the gospel was restored. Joseph then received this great truth:

"All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God; . . .

"For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts" (vs. 7, 9).

If our works and the desires of our hearts are the ultimate criteria of our character, how do we measure up? What kind of heart should we seek? For what kind of heart should we pray? How should we measure the worth of other people?

Today may I suggest four questions that deal with the heart that may help you determine how you are measuring up.

Have an honest heart

First question: How honest in heart am I? We pray that our missionaries will find the honest in heart. What does it mean to be honest in heart? It describes an individual who is open to truth, who will evaluate information or people without prejudice.

Honest-hearted persons are individuals without pretense, without hypocrisy. They are reliable in word and action. They have no "hidden agendas" to deceive others or to misrepresent facts. In contrast, those with conniving hearts will deceive and misrepresent.

An honest heart will lead to a change of heart. Spiritually speaking, a change of heart is not only desirable, but essential for eternal life. The Book of Mormon describes the conversion experience, which all of us must have, as a "mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2).

The Book of Mormon is a study of interesting contrasts between those who hardened their hearts and those whose hearts were softened by the Spirit of the Lord. How does one have his or her heart softened under the influence of the Holy Ghost?

Nephi's testimony provides an answer: "Having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold *he did* . . .

soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father" (1 Nephi 2:16; italics added).

After obtaining a testimony of the gospel and the Lord's church, we should then strive to become pure in heart. This will result in happiness and eventually the promise of a society without contention. It is the Savior's way to peace.

Have a willing heart

Second question: Do I have a willing heart?

Let us look again to the scriptures for guidance.

"Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days" (D&C 64:34).

A willing heart describes one who desires to please the Lord and to serve His cause first. He serves the Lord on the Lord's terms, not his own. There are no restrictions to where or how he will serve.

As one who has tendered calls to serve to many, I am always pleased to see members willing to give their time, energy, and effort to the upbuilding of the Church. They do so for one primary reason—to serve the Lord with all their heart, might, mind, and strength.

I have a friend who served as a priests quorum adviser. The boys and the adviser planned a kayak activity at Flaming Gorge, Utah. After some initial planning, one of the quorum members quietly approached the adviser and said, "We better not plan a kayak trip. Mike won't be able to go because he can't paddle." Mike was partially paralyzed on his right side. When he learned that the quorum was not going on the activity because of him, he told the boys, "I want to go. I can paddle." The quorum adviser placed his hand on Mike's shoulder and said, "OK, Mike. You're my paddle partner."

So from January to August, the boys built their kayaks. They departed to the reservoir in the first week in August.

Rhythm, togetherness, and teamwork are essential to keep a kayak in a straight line. Mike and his partner had more trouble than the others getting their

rhythm and strokes coordinated. Mike had almost no stroke of consequence on his right side. His adviser had to compensate by paddling easy on the left and hard on the right.

After several hours of learning to work together, Mike said to his adviser, "You wouldn't happen to have a Band-Aid, would you?" The adviser pulled his wallet out and gave Mike a Band-Aid. He placed it over a big water blister that had just popped in the crook of his hand between his thumb and his first finger. The hand and arm that was little used now had to help hold the paddle.

Several hours later, Mike turned again to his adviser, who was in the rear cockpit, and said, "Do you have any more bandages?" The adviser pulled out several and handed them to Mike. By now the crook between Mike's right thumb and his first finger was becoming raw. Mike applied the Band-Aids and resumed paddling.

The next day the crew set out again. The adviser encouraged Mike to rest from paddling and let his hand have a respite. The words fell on deaf ears. Instantly, Mike was paddling as he had the day before.

This day found a usual midday and afternoon wind blowing directly at the flotilla of kayak paddlers. It required stronger strokes and took much energy and time. Wincing from the hurt, Mike continued to paddle. Each suggestion that he rest intensified his will to carry his load.

Throughout the week, Mike persisted in holding his own. Though his hand was as raw as hamburger and awful to look at, he would not give up.

During the week's trip, the conversation with his senior companion often centered around his desire to go on a mission. Repeatedly Mike asked, "I hope they will let me go on a mission. Do you think my problem will prevent me from going?" Mike walks with a noticeable limp of his right leg. He has a firm handshake with the left hand, but his right hand doesn't open up all of the way.

How many who have no visible blemish have a heart like Mike's? How many young men with not a single cell

out of place fail to soften their hearts and desire to serve the Lord? How many who have so much forfeit their blessings because of selfish desires or inability to set lofty priorities?

My adviser friend said, "Mike taught eleven others that though one may appear to be a little less physically capable, the heart makes the difference in those who choose to overcome many odds and set a standard for others to follow."

Mike fulfilled an honorable mission to California and is now working in his hometown.

What does the Lord require for service? A willing heart and intense desire.

Have a charitable heart

Third question: Do I have an understanding, loving heart?

An understanding, loving heart is the pinnacle of all human emotions. As the Apostle Paul said, charity "breathe all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7). We come closest to becoming Christlike when we are charitable and understanding of others.

One may have many talents and knowledge but never acquire wisdom because he does not learn to be compassionate with his fellow man.

We will never approach godliness until we learn to love and lift. Indifference to others and their plight denies us life's sweetest moments of joy and service.

Have a change of heart

Last question (this taken directly from the Book of Mormon): "If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, . . . can ye feel so now?" (Alma 5:26; italics added).

Having a "change of heart" at one time in our lives is insufficient to give us an understanding heart today. Helping and understanding a person years ago do not fill us with the love of God today.

Christlike love must be continuous and contemporary.

Plant and nourish the seeds

One night a young idealist had a dream. He dreamed there was a new store in a nearby shopping mall. He went in and saw an angel behind a counter. Nervously, he asked what the shop sold.

"Everything your heart desires," replied the angel.

"Then I want peace on earth," exclaimed the idealist. "I want an end to famine, sorrow, and disease."

"Just a moment," replied the angel. "You haven't understood. We don't sell fruit here—only seeds."

I pray that God will give each of us the courage and desire to strive for a pure heart, a willing heart, an understanding and loving heart. May we take the seeds offered to all of us, plant them, and nourish them that we may help harvest the matured fruit of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If we can do this, when the final judgment is made and our hearts are measured by the Lord, our measurements will not be found deficient.

I bear my testimony and witness that the gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to change hearts and help individuals become pure, gentle, honest, kind, and loving.

We are led by a living prophet today. President Ezra Taft Benson has a pure,

gentle, honest, kind, and loving heart. This I know. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just given us his testimony.

The beautiful flowers that adorn the Tabernacle this morning were sent by the Saints of Tonga. We are grateful for this expression of their love.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience throughout many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "I Need Thee Every Hour."

The benediction will be given by Elder J. Richard Clarke of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder J. Richard Clarke offered the benediction.

FIRST DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 158th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 1988, at 2:00 P.M. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by the Salt Lake Tongan Choir. Sione T. Kinikini conducted, and Clay Christiansen was at the organ.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Monson made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren and sisters, President Ezra Taft Benson has asked that I conduct this, the second general session of the 158th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We welcome all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of

television, cable, or radio, and many who are watching in stake centers throughout the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico, where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission. We express our appreciation to the owners and operators of many radio and television stations and to the owners and operators of cable systems for their cooperation in making these proceedings available to members and friends of the Church in many countries.

We note that Elders Theodore M. Burton and John Sonnenberg are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall.

The music for this session will be provided by the Salt Lake Tongan Choir, under the direction of Brother Sione T. Kinikini, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ. As you look at these wonderful choir members, perhaps you would appreciate with me the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, who described the Polynesian sky as "immoderately blue," but for the Polynesians themselves he re-

served the fitting tribute, "the sweetest people God ever made."

The choir will begin this session by singing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Rex D. Pinegar, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Come, O Thou King of Kings," following which President Gordon B. Hinckley will present the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brothers and sisters, as requested by President Benson, I shall now present to you the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain President Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

We pay tribute to President Marion G. Romney, who passed away on May 20, 1988. Following President Romney's death, President Howard W. Hunter was

called and set apart as the President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

It is therefore proposed that we sustain President Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that council: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Any who may feel otherwise may so indicate.

In view of Elder Scott's call as a member of the Council of the Twelve, we release him as a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder J. Richard Clarke as a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may so indicate.

It is also proposed that we sustain Monte J. Brough, Albert Choules, Jr., Lloyd P. George, and Gerald E. Melchin as additional members of the First Quorum of the Seventy to serve for a period of five years and that we sustain all other General Authorities and general officers of the Church as presently constituted.

Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so manifest it.

President Benson, it appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative. We invite the newly sustained member of the Twelve and members of the Seventy to take their places on the stand.

President Monson

We welcome these newly called General Authorities whom you have sustained with your uplifted hands and with your hearts.

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Elder Scott, we welcome you to the quorum. Elder Richard Scott is a man in whom the Spirit is, and he is sustained by his lovely wife, Jeanene, who is not one whit less a spiritual power.

And to these four brethren who have joined the First Quorum of the Seventy we say, your fellowship will be enjoyed and your help very much appreciated.

stood before the grieving family and began his sermon.

If the parents had hoped for consolation from this man of the cloth, they were disappointed. He scolded them severely because the little boy had not been baptized. He told them bluntly that their little son was lost in endless torment, and it was their fault.

A comfortless funeral

A neighbor once told me that as a missionary in earlier days he and his companion were walking along a ridge in the mountains of the South. They saw people gathering in a clearing near a cabin some distance down the hillside. They had come for a funeral. A little boy had drowned, and his parents had sent for the preacher to "say words." The minister, who rode a circuit on horseback, would rarely visit these isolated families. But when there was trouble, they would send for him.

The little fellow was to be buried in a grave opened near the cabin. The elders stayed in the background as the minister

Truth about death brings comfort

After the grave was covered and the neighbors had gone, the elders approached the grieving parents. "We are servants of the Lord," they told the sobbing mother, "and we've come with a message for you."

As the grief-stricken parents listened, the elders unfolded the plan of redemption. They quoted from the Book of Mormon, "Little children need no repentance, neither baptism" (Moroni 8:11) and then bore testimony of the restoration of the gospel.

I have sympathy for that itinerant preacher, for he was doing the best he could with the light and knowledge he had. But there is more than he had to give.

What comfort the truth brings at times of sorrow! Since death is ever present with us, a knowledge of how essential it is to the plan of salvation is of immense, practical value. Every one of us should know how and why it came to be in the beginning.

The Fall

Mortal death came into the world at the Fall.

It is easier for me to understand that word *fall* in the scriptures if I think both in terms of *location* and of *condition*. The word *fall* means to descend to a lower place.

The fall of man was a move from the presence of God to mortal life on earth. That move down to a lower place came as a consequence of a broken law.

Fall may also describe a change in *condition*. For instance, one can fall in reputation or from prominence. The word *fall* well describes what transpired when Adam and Eve were driven from the garden. A transformation took place in their bodies. The bodies of flesh and bone became temporal bodies. *Temporal* means temporary. The scriptures say, "the life of all flesh is the blood thereof" (Leviticus 17:14; see also Deuteronomy 12:23; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 199-200, 367).

President Kimball explained: "Blood, the life-giving element in our bodies, replaced the finer substance which coursed through their bodies before. They and we became mortal, subject to illness, pains, and even the physical dissolution called death" ("Absolute Truth," *Ensign*, Sept. 1978, p. 5).

Temporal bodies must die

After the transformation of the Fall, bodies of flesh and bone and *blood* (unlike our spirit bodies) could not endure. Somehow the ingredient of blood carried with it a limit to life. It was as though a clock were set and a time given. There-

after, all living things moved inexorably toward mortal death.

Temporal, I repeat, means temporary. And so, death is the reality of life. When conditions develop because of age or illness or accident, the spirit is separated from the body.

Death can be tragic with the loss of one upon whom others depend for happiness, for many die too young. Sometimes it is slow in coming to one who yearns to join the loved ones who have gone before. Some sleep peacefully away, while others endure long-suffering. And we know that death can be terrible and violent. To threaten or to take life, even our own in suicide, is to offend God, for He "in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man" (Ether 8:19).

It is my conviction that in the spirit world prior to mortal birth, we waited anxiously for our time to enter mortality. I also believe that we were willing to accept whatever conditions would prevail in life. Perhaps we knew that nature might impose limits on the mind or on the body or on life itself. I believe that we nevertheless anxiously awaited our turn.

Funerals

One of the most solemn and sacred meetings of the Church is the funeral for a departed member. It is a time of caring and support when families gather in a spirit of tender regard for one another. It is a time to soberly contemplate doctrines of the gospel and the purposes for the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Except where burial is prohibited by law, we are counseled to bury our dead. There are important symbolic references to burial in the ordinance of baptism and elsewhere in the doctrines of the Church.

Where required by law, alternate methods of disposing of the remains do not nullify the Resurrection. On occasion a body will be lost through accident or military action. A funeral is nevertheless very important. For we take comfort in the promises in the scriptures of a complete restoration of both the body and the spirit.

A comforting, spiritual funeral is of great importance. It helps console the bereaved and establishes a transition from mourning to the reality that we must move forward with life. Whether death is expected or a sudden shock, an inspirational funeral where the doctrines of resurrection, the mediation of Christ, and certainty of life after death are taught strengthens those who must now move on with life.

Many attend funerals who do not come to church regularly. They come subdued in spirit and are teachable. How sad when an opportunity for conversion is lost because a funeral is less than it might have been.

Concern about reverence at funerals

There is reason to fear that we are drifting from the sacred spirit of reverence which should characterize funerals. The Brethren have discussed this in council meetings and are concerned.

I have read what the revelations teach us concerning mortal death, and the instructions given by the Brethren concerning funerals.

May I review some of that counsel. I hope that bishops will pay attention because the responsibility for arranging and conducting funerals in the Church rests upon the bishopric.

Funerals are church meetings

Funerals held under the direction of the priesthood are church meetings. They have been likened to sacrament meetings. I quote from a priesthood bulletin:

"It is requested that henceforth all funerals conducted under the auspices of officials of the Church follow the general format of the sacrament meeting with respect to music, speaking, and prayers. Music should be used at the beginning of the service prior to the opening prayer and possibly after the invocation also, as in our Sunday meetings. The closing portion of the funeral likewise should follow our customary pattern of having a final musical number immediately before the concluding prayer. Where feasible a choir

could very well be used on the musical program.

"With respect to speaking, it should be kept in mind that funeral services provide an excellent opportunity for teaching the basic doctrines . . . in a positive manner . . .

"Following these suggestions will help to keep our services in line with our established pattern and will avoid practices now so commonly followed elsewhere" (*Priesthood Bulletin*, Apr. 1972, p. 3).

Bishops always show tender regard for the family of the deceased, and insofar as their requests accord with established policy, they may willingly be met. On occasion a family member has suggested, sometimes even insisted, that some innovation be added to the funeral service as a special accommodation to the family. Within reason, of course, a bishop may honor such a request. However, there are limits to what may be done without disturbing the spirituality and causing it to be less than it might be. We should remember, too, that others attending the funeral may suppose that innovation is an accepted procedure and introduce it at other funerals. Then, unless we are careful, an innovation which was allowed as an accommodation to one family in one funeral may come to be regarded as expected in every funeral.

Occasionally a mortician, out of a desire to be of help and not understanding the doctrines and procedures of the Church, will alter a funeral service. Bishops should remember that when funerals are held under priesthood auspices the service should conform to the instructions given by the Church. We should regard the bishop rather than the family or the mortician as the presiding authority in these matters.

In recent years, there has been a tendency to stray from the accepted pattern for funerals. Sometimes the casket is kept open during the funeral, and members are expected to file by at the close of the funeral. And, instead of the simple family prayer, talks and even musical numbers have been added at the closing of the casket or at the cemetery before the grave is

dedicated. I do not refer to graveside services which may on occasion take the place of a formal funeral. I refer to those alterations of the approved simple agenda for funerals.

When innovations are suggested by family members, morticians, or others, which are quite out of harmony with that agenda, the bishop should quietly persuade them to follow the established pattern. It is not a rigid pattern and allows sufficient flexibility to have each funeral personally appropriate for the deceased.

Family speakers

There now seems to be the expectation that members of the immediate family must speak at funerals. While that may not be out of order, it should not be regarded as required. Family members ordinarily give the family prayer and dedicate the grave.

If family members do speak, and I repeat, it is not a requirement, they are under the same obligation to speak with reverence and to teach the principles of the gospel.

Sometimes family members tell things that would be appropriate at a family reunion or at some other family gathering but not on an occasion that should be sacred and solemn. While quiet humor is not out of order in a funeral, it should be wisely introduced. It should be ever kept in mind that the funeral should be characterized by spirituality and reverence.

Other memorial gatherings

One statement from the instructions refers to events other than the funeral service itself. I quote:

"The bishop should urge members to maintain a spirit of reverence, dignity, and solemnity at gatherings *connected with funerals*" (*General Handbook of Instructions* [1985], p. 2-6; italics added).

That should be kept in mind if a viewing is to be held. Viewings are not mandatory.

Funerals generally bring relatives and friends from distant places. There is

the tendency to greet one another joyfully and, unfortunately, at times noisily. Some visit at length, showing little regard for others who are waiting to pay their respects. Both the irreverence and the delay are discourtesies from which the spirituality of the occasion suffers.

Renewing of friendships should appropriately be made outside the room where the viewing is taking place. Local leaders need to caution us gently on this matter. Surely we do not want to be known as an irreverent people.

There is the need to reestablish the spirit of reverence at funerals whether in a chapel, a mortuary, or at other locations.

We should always have a tender regard for the feelings of the bereaved.

We are close, very close, to the spirit world at the time of death. There are tender feelings, spiritual communications really, which may easily be lost if there is not a spirit of reverence.

Be reverent to feel the Comforter

At times of sorrow and parting one may experience that "peace . . . which passeth all understanding" which the scriptures promise (*Philippians* 4:7). That is a very private experience. Many have come to marvel in their hearts that such a feeling of peace, even exaltation, can come at the time of such grief and uncertainty.

Testimonies are strengthened by such inspiration, and we come to know, personally know, what is meant when the Lord said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (*John* 14:18).

The Comforter works, as far as I have experience, in moments of reverence and quiet and solemnity. How sad if our own conduct is irreverent at a time when others are seeking so desperately for spiritual strength.

The revelations tell us that "thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die, and more especially for those that have not hope of a glorious resurrection" (*D&C* 42:45).

A funeral may be a happy-sad occasion when death comes as a welcome

release. Nevertheless, it is a sacred occasion and should be characterized by solemnity and reverence.

Death is necessary for happiness

Alma's son thought that death was unfair. In his remarkable sermon on repentance, Alma taught his son about death, saying, "Now behold, it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would destroy the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8).

Alma did not say that setting mortal death aside would merely delay or disturb the plan of happiness; he said it would *destroy* it.

The words *death* and *happiness* are not close companions in mortality, but in the eternal sense they are essential to one another. Death is a mechanism of rescue. Our first parents left Eden lest they partake of the tree of life and live forever in their sins. The mortal death they brought upon themselves, and upon us, is our journey home.

Reintroduce reverence

Three elements combine in a funeral as in no other meeting: the doctrines of the gospel, the spirit of inspiration, and families gathered in tender regard for one another.

May we reintroduce the attitude of reverence each time we gather to memorialize one who has moved through the veil to that place where one day each of us will go.

No consolation in parting compares with that "peace . . . which passeth all understanding." That is fostered by reverence. Reverence, please, brothers and sisters, reverence, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Boyd K. Packer, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us and given us wonderful instructions.

Elders Robert E. Sackley and L. Lionel Kendrick, sustained at April conference as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will now address us.

Elder Robert E. Sackley

"A more excellent way"

My beloved brethren and sisters, I want to speak to you today about what I consider to be one of the greatest challenges of our times—the need to pursue "a more excellent way." It was the Apostle Paul who said, "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31).

Why should we all seek to pursue "a more excellent way," and what does it mean? Finding "a more excellent way" means being totally converted to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and doing all that we can to fulfill those covenants we make in becoming His disciples.

The great prophet Alma, speaking of his own life and his conversion, said:

"I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.

"And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

"And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God" (Mosiah 27:24–26).

What it means to be converted

Being converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ means to walk in a newness of life. It means learning to yield to the Spirit and responding to the things that the Lord expects us to respond to. It means caring for and serving others with deep, considerate feelings rather than pursuing the natural desires of our own lives. In our day and time there has been a great tendency to shrug off the things of the Spirit as we become more and more involved in worldly things. We seem to be living in a world where people give little thought to others, as they are busily caring for their own needs. As followers of Christ, we must live outside ourselves and lose ourselves in service to others.

I believe we ought to remember what King Benjamin said so long ago. He said:

"For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19).

"Walk in newness of life"

It was the great Apostle Paul who said, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

To find that "more excellent way," brothers and sisters, we must cast aside our old selves and our old habits and ways of thinking. We must first recognize how we should change, and then we must make those changes, thus putting on the new and beginning to live as we have never lived before—walking in a newness of life.

The Apostle Paul also said, speaking of our relationship to the Lord, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised

up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

Throughout the world I personally have witnessed man's great tendency to think of himself without consideration of others. I believe with all my heart that we cannot come unto Christ unless we put on a "newness of life" in caring for those we love, in sharing the gospel, in keeping the commandments, and in honoring the covenants we have made. These are the things we must do now and better than we have ever done them before.

Study the Book of Mormon

Our great prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, has called upon each of us to read the Book of Mormon. He has not invited us to read this sacred record just to read the words. Through prayerful study of the Book of Mormon we can pursue that "more excellent way." Our prophet's motive in asking us to read the holy scripture is conveyed in the beautiful words of one of our hymns:

Abide with me; 'tis eventide.
Thy walk today with me
Has made my heart within me burn,
As I communed with thee.
Thy earnest words have filled my
soul
And kept me near thy side.
O Savior, stay this night with me;
Behold, 'tis eventide.
(*Hymns* [1985], no. 165)

Testimony and commitment

Now, to each of you, I bear my witness that you who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are involved in a true work. This is the Lord's work. I want each of you to know that I sustain it with all my heart. I sustain those who preside over me—our great and living prophet, who is guided by our Father in Heaven, and his associates, who are indeed messengers of the Lord Jesus Christ. This work is true, and this is the way to come unto Christ and walk in newness of life!

My brothers and sisters, it has been a humbling experience for me to speak to you in this great conference. I want you to know that you have my love, my faith, and my prayers. I know that no people on earth have more capacity to be what the Lord wants them to be than those of you who are members of this great church.

I also want you to know that my life was changed more than forty years ago as I read the Book of Mormon. There is nothing on earth that has influenced me more profoundly than my testimony of

this sacred record and the work to which it belongs. It has burned within my soul over the years with ever-increasing brightness, and I find great joy and satisfaction in walking in "newness of life" in my search for the "more excellent way."

And I find great joy and satisfaction in walking that journey with a beloved companion, and now with a posterity who seem to have caught the same vision.

May you have this experience, I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder L. Lionel Kendrick

Communications affect the soul

Heavenly Father has given us a priceless gift in our capacity to communicate with each other. Our communications are at the core of our relationships with others. If we are to return home safely to Heavenly Father, we must develop righteous relationships with His children here in mortality.

Our communications reflect in our countenance. Therefore, we must be careful not only *what* we communicate, but also *how* we do so. Souls can be strengthened or shattered by the message and the manner in which we communicate.

Accountable for all communication

We will be held accountable for all that we say. The Savior has warned "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36). This means that no communication shall be without consequence. This includes the slight slips of the tongue, the caustic communications that canker the soul, and the vain, vulgar, and profane words which desecrate the name of Deity.

Un-Christlike communications

There are certain kinds of un-Christlike communications which destroy relationships and are not for our development

but are for our destruction. They result in a diminished opportunity of returning home safely to Heavenly Father. One of the major ways that Satan uses to retard the development of righteous relationships is in the use of gossip, rumor, and slander on his communication network. Perhaps the more common un-Christlike communications are those of lying, blaming, criticizing, and anger.

1. Lying. The first of these communications is that of lying. To lie is to be untruthful, deceptive, deceitful, and dishonest. This is a basic communications problem which is not new; it goes back to the Garden of Eden.

Satan introduced the first recorded communications problem in the form of lying in his conversation with Eve. He asked recorded history's first question: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1).

Eve responded, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

"But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, . . . lest ye die" (vs. 2-3).

Satan, in a spirit of deception and defiance, responded, "Ye shall not surely die" (v. 4). He distorted the truth, denied the word of God, and planted the seeds of doubt about the word of Deity. Thus, Satan became the father of lies, deception, and doubt.

It is a serious sin to lie. The scriptures teach us that "lying lips are abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 12:22) and that "he that lieth and will not repent shall be cast out" (D&C 42:21). They also teach us that to lie about a person is a form of hatred, for "a lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it" (Proverbs 26:28). The Apostle Paul gave us counsel concerning this matter: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Ephesians 4:25).

Integrity is the core of our character. Without integrity we have a weak foundation upon which to build other Christlike characteristics.

2. *Blaming*. A second un-Christlike communication is that of blaming. This is a condemning communication. It is interesting that when the Lord confronted Adam in his fallen state, Adam began to place the blame on Eve for his actions. He said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12). When Eve was confronted, she placed the blame on Satan. She said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (v. 13).

It has been from the beginning and it will be till the end that the natural man will have a tendency to rationalize and to blame his behaviors on others or on certain circumstances. When we attempt to place responsibility for our choices on others, we are responding in a less than Christlike manner. Blaming is an unrighteous form of communication.

3. *Criticizing*. A third un-Christlike communication is that of criticizing. Positive criticism is feedback given with the purpose of helping another person to grow and to develop. This is both helpful and needful and is generally accepted and appreciated.

Negative criticism is intended to hurt and often to defame and to destroy. This caustic communication is cruel, and it tends to crush the character of all of those about whom it is directed. King Benjamin urged his people not to "have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably" (Mosiah 4:13). We should surely follow

this counsel and defend those who are defamed by these denunciations.

4. *Anger*. A fourth is anger. This is perhaps the most common form of un-Christlike communication. Anger causes anguish to the souls of all of those who experience the feeling as well as to those who are the recipients of this emotional explosion.

Anger shows a lack of self-control and an inability to relate in a righteous way to others. It is a senseless substitute for self-control. It is sometimes used as a selfish strategy to gain control of a relationship. President Wilford Woodruff counseled that "the moment a man or a woman becomes angry they show a great weakness" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:98).

We are instructed to "let all bitterness, . . . and anger, . . . and evil speaking, be put away" (Ephesians 4:31). The implication is clear: we have the capacity to control this carnal communication.

Counsel

Much counsel has been given concerning our communications with others. The counsel given by the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian Saints seems to be most appropriate for the Latter-day Saints. He cautioned, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good" (Ephesians 4:29). He further counseled to be "kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (v. 32).

Christlike communications

May we be found communicating with each other in a manner in which the Savior would communicate. Christlike communications are expressed in tones of love rather than loudness. They are intended to be helpful rather than hurtful. They tend to bind us together rather than to drive us apart. They tend to build rather than to belittle.

Christlike communications are expressions of affection and not anger, truth and not fabrication, compassion and not

contention, respect and not ridicule, counsel and not criticism, correction and not condemnation. They are spoken with clarity and not with confusion. They may be tender or they may be tough, but they must always be tempered.

The real challenge that we face in our communications with others is to condition our hearts to have Christlike feelings for all of Heavenly Father's children. When we develop this concern for the condition of others, we will then communicate with them as the Savior would. We will then warm the hearts of those who may be suffering in silence. As we meet people with special needs along life's way, we can then make their journey brighter by the things that we say.

Christlike communications will help us to develop righteous relationships and ultimately to return to our heavenly home safely. May we treasure the divine gift of communication, and may we use it wisely to build and to assist others on this marvelous journey through mortality. May

Heavenly Father bless us to this end, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "How Firm a Foundation" without announcement.

President Monson

Elders Robert E. Sackley and L. Lionel Kendrick, members of the First Quorum of the Seventy, have just addressed us, followed by the choir singing "How Firm a Foundation."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel," following which we shall be pleased to hear remarks from Elder John K. Carmack, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder John K. Carmack

I am sure I speak for all of you when I say how much we have been inspired by this great choir. I think I speak for all of you and especially the Brethren in welcoming these four new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and sustaining our new leaders, Elder Clarke and Elder Scott.

What does it mean to bear testimony? A testimony is an open declaration or confession of one's faith. To bear is to give or bring forward. So as I bear testimony, I am giving a declaration of my faith.

Most of you would gladly bear testimony if called upon. I wish we could yield a minute to each one of you. The real power of the Church is not financial or political, but the quiet testimonies of its members.

Keep testimonies growing

Members may describe their testimonies as growing. A few say they have

lost their testimonies. In bearing testimony, some use the term *know*, some *believe*. Some say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

I desire to edify all, no matter what the status of their testimonies.

When Shirley and I returned from the marriage of our son in the Oakland Temple last month, we strolled into the backyard. The lawn had looked particularly healthy and green this summer. To our horror, we discovered that the lawn had withered and turned as if to straw in the few days we had been gone. The automatic sprinkler had failed, and the hot summer sun had scorched the lawn.

Testimonies are like our lawn. They may be green and growing, but the heat of summer can change all of that. I shudder when I hear anyone declare, "I will never deny my testimony of the gospel." I seem to hear another standing by and answering quietly, "Well, we shall see."

We need your testimonies. We cannot afford to lose a single one. "Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; . . . therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee" (John Donne, *Devotions*, XVII).

The bell tolls for all of us. To those with strong testimonies I say, keep them growing. To those who have lost their testimonies I say, we need you back once again to take "sweet counsel together, and [to walk] unto the house of God in company" (Psalm 55:14). Isaiah promised, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles" (Isaiah 40:31).

The soil and roots of testimony

The parable of the sower teaches us the principles by which we can gain or retain our testimonies and hints of pitfalls which we need to avoid at the peril of losing them.

The bottom line is simple enough. The gospel seed must be sown in good ground. A seed planted in good ground will grow into a plant which will yield fruit and have a strong root system to withstand the heat of summer. But the plant must be nurtured and watered.

How can we develop that rich and healthy soil in which the word of God can grow? How can we ensure an adequate root system to withstand the heat of summer?

I shall offer three principles and three warnings in answer to the questions posed. This will lead to two specific exhortations to all of us.

Be rooted in Christ

First, our testimonies will be in good ground if they are rooted in Christ. Christ is the source of our greatest strength and comfort in times of stress or doubt.

Years ago I faced a temporal crisis in my business which threatened to engulf me. In answer to fervent prayer, the

Savior not only comforted me, but revealed the pathway out of the crisis into light.

In 1984, when President Hinckley called asking me to bring Sister Carmack and come to general conference for the interview resulting in this calling, the Savior visited me in spirit before dawn and again provided solace and peace.

"He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4). "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee" (Psalm 55:22). We can cry in times of distress, "O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death" (Alma 36:18).

I testify that He lives! I know His presence and have heard His voice in my mind and in my heart (see Enos 1:10, D&C 8:2).

He is the rock, the cornerstone, and our Redeemer. He is the "true vine" to which our testimonies must attach. Good soil, then, is enriched by the Savior.

Desire to gain a testimony

The second principle is so simple that it could easily escape our grasp and hide in the thicket of more profound and complex ideas.

Faith begins by a *desire* to know if the gospel is true. To desire is to want or long for something. It is a strong wish.

When we *desire* to gain a testimony, *desire* to know, *desire* to believe, testimony can begin or grow.

Abraham became the great patriarch because he desired "to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace." He desired "to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God" (Abraham 1:2).

Alma also explained that one must start on the road to a testimony by having a desire, or as he stated, you must "awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, . . . even if ye can no

more than *desire* to believe" (Alma 32:27; italics added).

Desire begets faith and testimony. Testimony isn't achieved by logic and study. For example, we can list hundreds of evidences that the Book of Mormon and the New Testament are true, but the skeptic can probably match us point by point. Without desire, the skeptic is "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).

I don't believe it was ever intended that the gospel be proven true by physical or documentary evidence acceptable to all. In this life, the believer must come to his witness by faith, not by logic and proof alone. And the starting point is to place the ingredient of desire in our soil.

The gospel experiment

I come now to the third point. A *spiritual experiment* similar to scientific procedures is the way one gains conviction about gospel principles and is an essential ingredient in achieving the rich soil in which the seed of testimony may grow.

Jesus explained, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). In other words, as you try it you can know it is true. This requires the faith to try, but it yields spiritual evidence. To the disciple who tries the experiment will come conviction, knowledge, and light. As the disciple continues, he receives "more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24).

So when I declare that I know this gospel is true, that Christ lives, and that Ezra Taft Benson is God's prophet, I am saying, in effect, that doing and serving have brought me the conviction that this work is true.

I declare today that the lame are healed, the blind are restored to sight, and the dead are raised. Pathways are illuminated. Men and women are called of God by prophecy, and the Lord reveals His will to His prophets for the guidance of the Church.

The three keys then, are, to be rooted in Christ, to have a desire to know,

and to do the things God has commanded. All can come to know that the doctrine is true, growing from light and truth to further light and truth until the perfect day.

The seed "will begin to swell . . . and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good" (Alma 32:28).

Yes, there are other ways to a testimony. Paul was converted by a heavenly manifestation. By study and reason one can find the truth. But a testimony based on reason and knowledge alone, without a spiritual witness, can be in danger when a premise of its tight logic gets weak or crumbles. Thanks be to the Lord that my testimony is founded on faith and continues to grow through experience. I have seen, I have felt, and I know what I know.

Yes, I have a whole box of unanswered questions, none of them threatening to my testimony. New questions enter that box regularly. Others come out of the box, yielding to both study and experience. My hope is that I will endure the summer heat and retain that testimony, anchored in Christ, until the end of my mortal probation.

Dangers to a testimony

As I have watched beloved friends and family lose their faith, I have tried to identify major causes.

1. *Arrogance, or pride.* One of the three dangers I shall mention is arrogance, or pride. Intellectual pursuits, financial success, positions of power, and other achievements, in and of themselves neither morally bad nor good, sometimes lead to pride and away from humble dependence on the Lord. Jacob cautioned that "to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God" (2 Nephi 9:29). Financial and political power can also be seductive and corrupting influences.

It helps to remember and emulate the meekness of Enoch, Moses, and Spencer Kimball.

2. *Sin.* Testimonies are weakened by sin, especially sexual transgressions. The

sinner sometimes blames someone else, rejects the gospel, and flees. A plant growing in rocky soil withers quickly. Serious transgression, then, is the second danger to our testimonies. The road back includes removing the rocks, turning over and enriching the soil, overcoming the sin, and resisting further temptations. Increasing numbers are returning to the Church by repenting of their sins. They seldom completely lose their testimonies.

3. *Substitution.* The final danger I shall call substitution. Some fine and capable people become so committed to science, philosophy, history, art, music, athletics, professional pursuits, intellectual hobbies, or recreation that these interests replace the simple core values, covenants, and doctrines of the gospel. These pursuits become a substitute religion and the governing force in their lives.

The central gospel principles repeated over and over in the covenants and ordinances of the temple, embodied in the sacrament, and found in the scriptures are available to all of us if we do not imagine somehow that we have outgrown the gospel of Christ. We also have our latter-day gnostics who "know" more than the garden-variety disciples of Christ.

I do not mean, however, to suggest that we should not continue to learn and deepen our knowledge about life and about the gospel. A solid, mature, and growing knowledge of the gospel is desirable and should be a constant goal.

To repeat, three dangers which can damage our faith and harm or destroy our testimonies are arrogance and pride, serious transgressions, and the substitution of peripheral pursuits and values for Christ and the central core gospel ideals and standards.

As I prepared for this moment, the backyard lawn was beginning to look

green again, but the sprinkler on the front lawn shut down without warning. One must not become weary with well-doing (see D&C 64:33). Our testimonies, like our lawns, can wither.

Grow and serve

At this point you may be asking, "So what?" I shall limit myself to two exhortations, one to all the members of the Church and one to the leadership of the Church.

First, to grow in light and testimony we must magnify our Church callings throughout our lives, our entire lives. By this means, combined with spontaneous Christian service, we will never lose our testimonies. They will grow brighter and greener.

And then finally, to the Church leaders: please ordain men to the priesthood and extend a call to every brother and sister, active or less-active, giving each an opportunity to serve others and to apply gospel principles. One Church calling for each member is an ideal which we can reach in most places. I know of nothing which will do more to build testimonies and bless people.

And may I just take this opportunity to express my great love to all of you members of the Church. I love you and appreciate you and admire all the things you do. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder John K. Carmack, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Brothers and sisters, the topic I wish to address is one about which the Brethren

are deeply concerned. I have titled my remarks "The Hand of Fellowship."

The gospel is for all

In the New Testament we read that Peter, the head of the Church after the Savior's resurrection and ascension, was informed in a vision that the gospel is for all mankind. He said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35). This same message appears in the Book of Mormon and in the Doctrine and Covenants. Every soul is to have an opportunity to hear and then accept or reject the gospel.

Extend fellowship to all

In the Church we use the word *fellowship* to describe our efforts (1) to encourage less-active members to return to full activity and (2) to help new converts make the transition into the Church following baptism. I believe those meanings are valid, but to me the word *fellowship* has a much broader connotation. I believe we members do not have the option to extend the hand of fellowship only to relatives, close friends, certain Church members, and those selected nonmembers who express an interest in the Church. Limiting or withholding our fellowship seems to me to be contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Savior offered the effects of his atoning sacrifice to all mankind. He said, "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10). Can we justify doing less? Let me give you a few examples that illustrate my message.

Proclaim the gospel to all

Near the end of his earthly ministry, the resurrected Jesus instructed his disciples with these words: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). That instruction is in force today and is the mandate for General Authorities, missionaries, and other members of the

Church to travel to the four corners of the world teaching the gospel.

Proclaiming the gospel to all mankind is a fundamental part of the mission of the Church. As those of you know who have supported full-time missionaries, the Church devotes very substantial resources, in time and money, to missionary work.

This big world is filled with billions of people. Today more than 35,700 full-time missionaries are combing the earth looking for those of our Father's children who will listen to the message of the Restoration. These dedicated servants of the Lord are serving in 221 missions and are teaching the gospel in 64 different languages. We expect that approximately 245,000 converts will be baptized during 1988. This number is impressive; however, approximately that same number of people are being born in the world every day.

In the missionary training centers, we teach the missionaries that they must have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are taught that they need to develop genuinely warm, personal, caring relationships with those whom they meet. They must learn to listen with understanding and to show sincere sensitivity to the interests and concerns of those they teach. As missionaries teach the doctrines, they need to find out what their contacts think and feel so they can clarify misunderstandings, ease doubts, resolve concerns, and provide encouragement. The warm, sincere spirit of the missionaries is essential to help nonmembers feel and recognize the Spirit of the Lord, because the Spirit is the power that leads to conversion.

Welcome newcomers

Brothers and sisters, we must ever keep in mind that missionary work throughout the world requires great sacrifice, and all of this sacrifice, effort, and exhaustive preparation of missionaries may be in vain if those who accept the gospel do not receive a loving and warm welcome by the members of the Church.

We know from years of experience that the first contacts new converts have with members in wards or branches are critical to the conversion process. Recently, several of the Brethren were discussing how we accept and welcome newcomers. Two of them shared experiences with me.

Stories about fellowship

Elder Devere Harris of the First Quorum of the Seventy told me of a recent visit he made to a long-established ward in Utah. He said, "I entered there as a stranger and tried every way that I knew to strike up a conversation, or to say hello, or to be kind, or to be greeted, or to be known. Everyone ignored me; nobody would speak to me—no one!"

"Finally, a man recognized me. He said, 'Oh, Elder Harris.' The bishop turned around and said, 'What did you say?' The brother said, 'This is Elder Harris of the First Quorum of the Seventy.'

"Well, things changed. It wasn't long before I was asked to sit on the stand; they wondered if I wouldn't like to bear my testimony. After the meeting, many people shook my hand. As I left, I thought, 'What a tragedy! A gray-haired man who was unknown walks into a meeting. Nobody recognizes him, nobody says hello, nobody is kind. Then, because of his Church position, everybody changes and wants to be friendly.'"

The second story involves two sisters who live two thousand miles from each other. Each was taught the missionary discussions by the full-time missionaries. Each felt the confirming witness of the Spirit and was baptized. Both were single adults in their early twenties. One sister attended church meetings, met the bishop, developed friendships with members who invited her into their homes. Ward members made her feel welcome and wanted. She was given a Church calling immediately after her baptism, and she continued to learn and live gospel principles while associating with ward and stake members. She participated continually, serving in various ward, stake,

and general Church callings. In time, she married in the temple, and she maintains her standing as a member in full fellowship.

The other sister, after receiving the witness of the Spirit, never met her bishop personally. She received no visits by home teachers or visiting teachers and was given no Church calling. For several weeks she attended Sunday ward meetings, but she was mostly ignored. In due course, the missionaries who had taught her left the area, and her interest in the gospel waned without the support of members. She was not "remembered and nourished" (Moroni 6:4). Soon she stopped attending church services, resumed her old friendships and life-style, and married a nonmember. Today she is a fine, productive, contributing citizen in her community and a loving, conscientious wife and mother. But she does not enjoy the rich blessings that come from full fellowship in the Church.

Recently, the *Church News* featured two older sister missionaries who exemplify the attributes of love and caring for others while serving on their missions in Duchesne, Utah. The stake president credited these sisters with bringing a spirit of warmth and friendship to his stake. In fact, the teaching and fellowshiping efforts of these sisters have helped change the attitude of the whole stake. The work of the Lord is more effectively coming together and influencing everyone, including the less active as well as non-members. The stake president said that in small farming communities, the activation of a less-active family has a big effect on others. He expects twelve to fifteen families to become active and go through the temple this year.

Brothers and sisters, we must ever keep in mind the time, effort, and other resources that missionaries and others spend to find and teach one of our Father's children. Surely, every one of us ought to be alert, looking for ways to be of service to the newcomer. We might ask ourselves how the newcomers in our wards would be treated if we were the only ones they ever met. Every member of the Church should foster the attributes

of warmth, sincerity, and love for the newcomers, as the missionaries are taught to do.

Be friendly at church

Brothers and sisters, we members must help with the conversion process by making our wards and branches friendly places, with no exclusivity, where all people feel welcome and comfortable. You bishops have been given many who can help you foster fellowship. Teach the children, youth, and adults that being warm and friendly are Christlike qualities. In your ward council meetings, consider ways to improve the feeling of fellowship in your ward. Be sure the missionaries introduce you to every investigator before he or she is baptized.

Assign someone to greet at the doors, paying special attention to newcomers and guests. On occasion, use priesthood and Relief Society meetings to teach home and visiting teachers how to fellowship all who live within the ward. Take advantage of the flexibility you have in using high priests and stake and full-time missionaries to lead the less active and new converts into full fellowship. In the true spirit of shepherding, bishoprics can help create a friendly atmosphere by mingling with members when they are gathering together.

True Christian fellowship

Brothers and sisters, my message is urgent because we need to retain in full fellowship many more of the new converts and return to activity many more of the less active. I urge you to increase the spirit of friendship and pure Christian fellowship in your neighborhoods. A new convert or recently activated member should feel the warmth of being wanted and being welcomed into full fellowship of the Church. Members and leaders of the Church should nurture and love them as Jesus would.

In addition to welcoming and accepting recent converts and less-active members, we need to reach out and extend our friendship to others regardless of whether

they are interested in the gospel or not. We must not be too selective in identifying those we feel are worthy or appreciative of our attention. The spirit of true Christian fellowship must include everyone. Our understanding of the gospel should help us see clearly that all people are our brothers and sisters, children of our Heavenly Father. Perhaps more of us could emulate this example.

Years ago while walking up Main Street with his father, Elder LeGrand Richards, then the Presiding Bishop of the Church, tipped his hat and greeted everyone. Upon arrival at their destination, President George F. Richards, then the President of the Council of the Twelve, said, "Son, do you know all those people?" Bishop Richards responded, "Yes, Daddy, I know them all—all but their names."

Share the love of Christ

During his earthly ministry, Jesus posed this challenging question: "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" (Matthew 5:46). This teaching is clear. We should extend our love far beyond family, close friends, and fellow members of the Church. Our hearts should be open to everyone.

We can share the love of Christ in simple acts. For example, the warmth of a radiant smile and friendly greeting can go far in smoothing the way for good neighborly relations. Jesus posed another question: "And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?" (Matthew 5:47).

Some years ago, a friend of mine was doing some work one morning on his garage roof. He looked down and saw a load of cement being delivered to his non-member neighbor. He could see that the neighbor could use some help. My friend came down from his roof and, without being asked, carried his own cement finishing tools across the street and began helping with the job. Because he had experience doing cement work, his help turned out to be most welcome. Although the neighbor had expressed a dislike for

members of the Church, he showed genuine appreciation for this one by the end of the day. This was the beginning of a long and lasting friendship.

Jesus gave us a new commandment and said it would identify his disciples:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

Love nonmembers unconditionally

As disciples of Christ, we need to feel genuine charity for one another. As we do, new light will come into our own lives. This charity is essential in missionary work, but we must never allow ourselves to treat our neighbors only as potential converts. We have had the sad experience of seeing members of the Church who attempted to convert their neighbors and friends and, when they did not respond, withdrew their friendship and neighborliness. We must not be so anxious to share the gospel that we become insensitive to the feelings of others.

I encourage you to build personal, meaningful relationships with your non-member friends and acquaintances. Interest in the gospel may come later as a natural extension of a good friendship. Invitations to participate in gospel-related activities often will strengthen relationships with acquaintances. If they are not interested in the gospel, we should show unconditional love through acts of service and kindness, and never imply that we see an acquaintance only as a potential convert. Members must understand that when

a nonmember declines one invitation to investigate the gospel, he has not necessarily rejected the gospel.

Let us adhere to the counsel of the Apostle Paul and be "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

Despite some well-publicized criticism to the contrary, I believe Church members want to be good friends and neighbors wherever they live, but some are shy and overly cautious. This can appear to be clannish. We must not reserve our kindness and affection only for our fellow members. We must be sensitive and not oblivious to the feelings of those whose views may differ from ours. Considering the early history of the Church in these latter days, unkindness or indifference toward others should be abhorrent to members of the Church.

I bear my testimony that "God is no respecter of persons"; we should follow his example in all of our associations with our fellowmen. I testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of all mankind. He loves all men and looks to each one of us to do the same. May we so do I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker, and we shall hear from him now.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

I join in welcoming all the new Brethren, including Elder Richard Scott to the Council of the Twelve.

Years ago, Elder Scott was called as a mission president. The distinguished admiral for whom he worked was puzzled

and even upset that Elder Scott accepted that call. Later, that same admiral, a distinguished public servant, wrote a book called *Why Not the Best?* I suggest the answer to the admiral's question concerning that call is answered in the title of his

book, which has some applicability today as well, as the Lord has called one of "the best."

Following Jesus: the trek of treks

Sincerely striving to follow Jesus will try our faith and our patience—sometimes sorely (see Mosiah 23:21). Even with all its travail, however, it is the trek of treks.

As we all know, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ gives us abundant answers. But Jesus also asked some searching questions which tell us even more about the stretching journey of discipleship. To those who inquired about His authority, Jesus, in turn, put a pointed question, saying, "Answer me." They could not (see Mark 11:29–30). To all His applicable questions, the invitation "Answer me" stands to this day.

Thank and trust God

"Where are the nine?" inquired Jesus concerning the healed lepers who did not return with thanksgiving (Luke 17:17; italics added). How often are we like the nine? To receive God's blessings without acknowledging their Source is to be unrealistic as well as ungrateful.

We offend God not only by our ingratitude, brothers and sisters, but also by not confessing His competent hand in bringing to pass His transcending purposes on the earth (see D&C 59:21). Too many actually doubt God's plans will finally prevail. Not only in the years ahead, but even now, mortal self-sufficiency will be confounded. Profound fear will eventually pervade this perplexed planet (see D&C 63:33, 88:91). Would that mankind could live in faith, not fear—and with gratitude, not forgetfulness.

Besides, we are all beggars anyway (see Mosiah 4:19), beggars rescued by the Creator of the universe, who lived humbly as a person "of no reputation" (Philippians 2:7). In contrast, we are sometimes so anxious about our personal images, when it is His image we should have in our countenances (see Alma 5:14).

Strive for spiritual balance

"Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath?" Jesus counter-challenged (Mark 3:4; italics added). Can we not keep the spirit of the law without leaving other things undone? Without such spiritual balance, staying on the straight and narrow path will be a great trial for us (see 2 Corinthians 3:6).

Even seeking after things which are praiseworthy or lovely is accelerated by believing all the Articles of Faith which precede article thirteen. Similarly, the followers of the Ten Commandments are not divided into two vast platoons—one specializing in the "thou shalts" and the other in the "thou shalt nots."

True orthodoxy consists of keeping the doctrines, ordinances, covenants, and programs of the Church and Christian service in proper balance. In this daily balancing process, we are not excused from exercising good judgment—after all that manuals and handbooks can do.

Render appropriately to God and Caesar

Whose image and superscription is on it? asked Jesus, using a coin now extinct, and exposing those seeking to entrap Him, while giving counsel relevant for as long as there are mortal rulers (see Matthew 22:20). Yes, to Caesar we owe taxes. But to God, in whose image we are minted, we owe ourselves!

In our members' diverse and sometimes stressful situations the world over, can we not follow the twelfth article of faith, rendering appropriately unto God and Caesar? After all, Jesus' immediate audience was a repressed people living under a military protectorate supporting corrupt civil authority.

Keep perspective

If ye know how to give, how much more shall your Father give? (see Matthew 7:11). Though imperfect, we mortals do good, sometimes much good. But can we keep mortal goodness in perspective? Comparatively, we are so much

quicker to return favors and to pay our debts to mortals—and we should be responsive and grateful. But what of Him who gave us mortal life itself, who will erelong give us all immortality, and who proffers to the faithful the greatest gift of all, eternal life?

We are poor bookkeepers, indeed!

Walk by faith

Why does this generation seek a sign? queried Jesus with a deep sigh (see Mark 8:11). The more wicked and adulterous the people of a particular period, the more they demand signs as a condition of belief. Sensual individuals crave and live by sensations. Disciples, instead, walk and “overcome by faith” (D&C 76:53), accepting gratefully the evidence of things not seen which are true (see Hebrews 11:1, Alma 32:21) and using quietly God’s spiritual gifts.

Christ will tutor us

What desirest thou of me? the resurrected Jesus inquired one by one of the Nephite Twelve (see 3 Nephi 28:1). He knows our individual bearing capacities. He will lead us along, not herd us (see D&C 78:18, 50:40). Foremost, the gospel can even educate our desires; then these desires can work affirmatively in us and for us.

Are we really ready, however, for the responsibility and the high adventure of being tutored by Him who genuinely wishes to honor our individual desires, if we do not desire amiss?

As for what God gives differentially to others, we need not be concerned. Peter, inquiring about John’s future role, was asked by Jesus, “What is that to thee? follow thou me” (John 21:22). Sometimes, brothers and sisters, we do too much comparing and too little following. Sometimes also a few resent God’s having chosen someone else; perceiving themselves as passed over, they then go under spiritually.

The great question

“*What think ye of Christ?*” (Matthew 22:42; italics added). However the world ignores or responds to it, this is the reverberating and the great question! (see Alma 34:5–6). Can we answer with both our lives and our tongues, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”? (Matthew 16:16). Until we can, whatever else we say and do will, in the end, make little difference.

Be grounded and rooted in Christ

“*Will ye also go away?*” (John 6:67; italics added), the Master asked His disciples after many of his fair-weather followers went back and “walked no more with him” (v. 66). The very process of daily living makes and breaks followers. Life’s stern seasons and storms overturn those not grounded and rooted (see Ephesians 3:17, Colossians 1:23, 1 Peter 5:10). However, those who “believe and are sure” (John 6:69) about Jesus’ divinity do not panic, for instance, at the arrival of a new volley of fiery darts; they merely hold aloft the quenching shield of faith.

Such are but a few of Jesus’ searching questions.

May I add several much lesser questions of my own? Some are addressed to all, and some to members as we follow the counsel of an ancient prophet to “consider [our] ways” (Haggai 1:7).

Obey to keep focus

Why is our life-style sometimes blurred and out of focus when we have been told clearly what “manner of men” and women we ought to be? (3 Nephi 27:27; see also 2 Peter 3:11). Of course, as individuals, we are free to choose! But wrong choices will make us less free. Furthermore, erosive error gradually makes one less and less of an individual. God and His prophets would spare us that shrinkage.

True disciples nourish faith

Why are a few members, who somewhat resemble the ancient Athenians, so eager to hear some new doubt or criticism? (see Acts 17:21). Just as some weak members slip across a state line to gamble, a few go out of their way to have their doubts titillated. Instead of nourishing their faith, they are gambling "offshore" with their fragile faith. To the question "Will ye also go away?" these few would reply, "Oh, no, we merely want a weekend pass in order to go to a casino for critics or a clubhouse for cloakholders." Such easily diverted members are not disciples but fair-weather followers.

Instead, true disciples are rightly described as steadfast and immovable, pressing forward with "a perfect brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20; see also D&C 49:23).

Accept life's tests

Why do we resist and resent life's developmental and obedience tests? By declaring, "I will walk in my own way and do that which is right in my own eyes," we reject the curriculum of the mortal school in which we are irrevocably enrolled (see Judges 21:25, D&C 1:16). There is only one exit gate leading unto eternal life. Unhappily, only a few find it—but not because God is exclusionary, but because they exclude God from their lives. Even God cannot bring to pass a reconciliation involving only one party.

Take up the cross daily

Why do some think adultery and similar sins are permissible as long as anything else they do is commendable? The Lord's focus is not on the one thing we do which is good, but, instead, on the one or more things we still lack in order to have eternal life (see Mark 10:21, 2 Peter 1:9). To compose a symphony, to win a battle, or to save a company—each can be a commendable and worthy entry in the book of life, but these do not compensate for breaking the seventh commandment. In the arithmetic of heaven, several

commendables do not cancel out one inexcusable! The clear command from Jesus is to deny ourselves immorality and "to take up [the] cross daily," not to indulge ourselves and to take up the cross occasionally! (Luke 9:23; see also 3 Nephi 12:30). The Old Testament advises, "He that ruleth" himself is better "than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

Refuse ritual prodigalism

Why do some of our youth risk engaging in ritual prodigalism, intending to spend a season rebelling and acting out in Babylon and succumbing to that devilishly democratic "everybody does it"? Crowds cannot make right what God has declared to be wrong. Though planning to return later, many such stragglers find that alcohol, drugs, and pornography will not let go easily. Babylon does not give exit permits gladly. It is an ironic implementation of that ancient boast, "One soul shall not be lost" (Moses 4:1).

The philosophy of ritual prodigalism is "eat, drink, and be merry, . . . [and] God will beat us with a few stripes" (2 Nephi 28:8). This is a cynical and shallow view of God, of self, and of life. God never can justify us "in committing a little sin" (v. 8). He is the God of the universe, not some night-court judge with whom we can haggle and plea bargain!

Of course God is forgiving! But He knows the intents of our hearts. He also knows what good we might have done while AWOL. In any case, what others do is no excuse for the disciple from whom much is required (see Alma 39:4). Besides, on the straight and narrow path, there are simply no corners to be cut (see D&C 82:3).

Be sensitive and true

Why do some crush and break the tender hearts of spouses and children through insensitivity and even infidelity? Unable to sustain lasting relationships, shouting, in effect, "I am my own, I am in charge!" they retreat like cowards from their real responsibilities (see Jacob 2:35).

In such pathetic men or women, so strong is the competition between self-pity and self-indulgence that these urges both come in second! Furthermore, just as gender was of no saving significance in the self-destructive dash of the Gadarene swine to the sea, neither is it today.

God's work is one of finding, helping, reconciling—not of leaving, betraying, and deserting. Betrayed Uriah, deserted in the fray, represents many (see 2 Samuel 11:15).

Jesus' majesty and humility

In closing, these next observations underscore both the majesty and the humility of Him who said simply, "Answer me."

Though crucified briefly between two thieves, Jesus now sits eternally on the right hand of God! (see Luke 22:69, 1 Peter 3:22). He is the Lord of the constructed universe, yet He was known merely as "the carpenter's son" (Matthew 13:55).

He fashioned worlds without number, providing us with astrophysical awe when we view even "the least of these" (D&C 88:47). Yet, to aid just one blind man—with clay formed from spittle, "He from thick films [purged] the visual ray, / And on the sightless eyeball [poured] the day" (Alexander Pope, in Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* [New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1893], p. 394; see also John 9:6).

Jesus was weary but never bored. He was ever tutoring but never condescending. His doctrines are like glistening diamonds with many dimensions, displaying their verity and beauty, facet by facet, depending on the faith and preparation of the beholder.

Jesus had access to immense power but never used it improperly. He refused to put on a show for sign-seeking Herod (see Luke 23:8). Legions of protective angels waited Christ's command, a command which never came (see Matthew 27:42).

Jesus was often misunderstood and rejected. But He felt most forsaken and alone on Calvary—just as the final act of

the Atonement was enveloping mankind in His eternal love. Ironically, during the moments when in agony He was benefiting billions upon billions of mortals, He was attended by only a faithful few.

His infinite atonement affected every age, every dispensation, and every person (see 2 Nephi 9:7, 25:16). Hence the appropriate symbolism of His bleeding at each and every pore—not just some—in order that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

There will be no end to the ripples of the Resurrection resulting from the infinite Atonement. There will be no end either to the posterity of those who receive eternal life—eventually more posterity than the stars in the heavens (see Genesis 26:3–4). How infinite indeed!

These observations describe only in small part Him who said, "Answer me," reminding us from Whom that invitation has come. May we, brothers and sisters, answer Him with the entirety of our lives, sincerely singing, "We feel it a pleasure to serve thee, And love to obey thy command" (*Hymns* [1985], no. 19). May we be thankful for all God's prophets in every dispensation, including President Benson, I so pray in the name of the Lord of all the prophets, even Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Maxwell. Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We remind the brethren of the General Priesthood Meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. Those desiring to attend this broadcast must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the Salt Lake Tongan Choir for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon and express to them in their own language the fond greeting *mālō e lelei*.

The choir will now sing in closing, "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Robert B. Harbertson of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Robert B. Harbertson offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 158th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 1, 1988. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

The music for this session was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus. The choir was directed by Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden, with John Longhurst at the organ.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this general priesthood session. We extend our love and best wishes to all of the brethren participating with us.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, in the BYU Marriott Center, and in locations in many countries around the world. We note that Elders Vaughn J. Featherstone and F. Enzio Busche are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Philip T. Sonntag and F. Arthur Kay are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of the brethren in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this afternoon, Elder Richard G.

Scott was sustained as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and Elder J. Richard Clarke was sustained as a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Elders Monte J. Brough, Albert Choules, Jr., Lloyd P. George, and Gerald E. Melchin were sustained as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden with Brother John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin by the choir singing "Hark, All Ye Nations." Following the singing, Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Hark, All Ye Nations."

Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "The Lord Is My Shepherd." Following the choir number, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

The choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My beloved brethren of the priesthood, I am honored yet humbled by the assignment to speak to you this evening. I am aware of the great priesthood power that you faithful brethren bear and of the untold good you do in furthering the Lord's work.

How pleased I was today to raise my hand in sustaining Elder Richard G. Scott as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and I'll have the privilege to sit on his left for many years.

During the two years since my call to be a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, I have refined my view of the Church and its place in the world. I have developed a deeper gratitude for the gospel, a broader affection and admiration for the members, and a greater appreciation for the love our Heavenly Father and his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, have for each one of us. They have shown us the way to be at peace with ourselves and the way to progress and develop.

I have appreciated the privilege of associating regularly with the Brethren of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve and with the other General Authorities. These great leaders, whom the Lord has called to direct his work, have a pure love for the people. They are compassionate and sensitive, especially to those who are ill, infirm, or less fortunate. They feel a driving urgency to build the kingdom of God, and they devote their time and energy totally to this work. Their prayers, which truly are expressions of gratitude and sacred pleadings for guidance, are a source of inspiration to me. I testify to you that the Spirit of the Lord is present at our meetings and guides our deliberations.

Treasure Church membership

Being members of the Church truly is a privilege and an honor. We must be as Paul the Apostle and never be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Romans 1:16) nor feel threatened when the Church, its leaders, its members, or

its doctrines are criticized or maligned. On the contrary, we should be bold and assertive in proclaiming the gospel. We should be grateful to participate in this great latter-day movement.

Young men, prepare yourselves

I wish to speak first to the young men who bear the Aaronic Priesthood. I want you to understand that we have trust and confidence in you. We realize that from your ranks will come the next generation of Church officers, teachers, and community leaders. Most importantly, you will be fathers and patriarchs in your own families. Your tasks then will be to teach and prepare the generation that follows you. My counsel to you is very simple. In the words of the Lord, "Prepare ye for that which is to come" (D&C 1:12).

Seek counsel from parents

The best source of instruction, guidance, and counsel that most of you young men have is your parents. In the divine wisdom of our Heavenly Father, each of you was born to parents who arrived on this earth a few years ahead of you. They have been over the ground you young men are covering now. They have learned what leads to success and happiness and what leads to misery and sorrow. Seek their counsel, listen to them, and learn from them. You will learn from your own experiences also, but you do not need to make every mistake yourselves. In our society, young people often see parents as the past and friends as the future. Magazines, movies, and music made for teenagers often emphasize going your own way and dismissing parents as naive. Avoid that kind of thinking; it is false. Your parents are wise. They have a maturity that comes only from experience. The Lord has given them the fundamental task of teaching, guiding, and caring for you and helping you prepare for the challenges that are necessary for your growth

and progress (see Mosiah 4:14–15; D&C 68:25–28, 93:40–50; Proverbs 22:6).

When I was a young man, I looked up to my priesthood leaders. They included Charles E. Forsberg, my bishop when I was five years old. His English was somewhat broken, but he knew my name. That was important to me even at that early age. Others of my priesthood leaders were my father, who also was my bishop, and Marion G. Romney, who followed my father as bishop of our ward. These leaders made a big difference in my life; your leaders will do the same for you if you stay close to them.

Have courage to choose the right

Sooner or later, every young man must decide on the direction of his life—whether he will choose good or evil, happiness or misery. The God-given principle of agency provides that right of choice in a world filled with beautiful, heavenly creations on the one hand and with the evil designs of Satan, the enemy of God, on the other. Always have the courage to make the right choice. You can do it because “it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil” (Moroni 7:15). We learn that in the Book of Mormon. The Lord has given you that judgment. Remember, “God . . . will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Magnify priesthood callings

Always be aware of the privilege you have received of bearing the priesthood of God. It is a unique gift to the world. Bearing the priesthood is an honor and an opportunity, connected with a sacred obligation to magnify every priesthood calling. See every assignment as a blessing, regardless of how small or routine it may seem. Complete each one as well as you can, always striving to do more than is required or expected. Recognize that you are acting for the Lord by authority you have received from him each time you gather fast offerings, bless or pass the sacrament, baptize, and visit assigned families as home teachers. Your

ability to accept greater tasks will depend on how well you do the lesser ones.

Prepare for missionary service

Each one of you young men should be preparing for missionary service. Make yourselves worthy to receive a mission call by learning and living the principles of the gospel, especially by living clean, pure lives. Those who bear the priesthood must never defile it or bring shame to the Lord’s church. Prepare also by studying the divine principles of the gospel so you can teach them to those who are awaiting the truth. Lastly, prepare yourselves financially. The world needs the gospel message; you need to help declare it.

Fortify yourselves

In these latter days when keeping the commandments of God is unimportant to many, you young men have a greater challenge to honor the priesthood than any who have held it at any other time. This is true because Lucifer is on the prowl. He knows that his days are numbered. He has learned how to destroy people, especially the youth. He seeks to find any chink in the armor of each person. He knows our weaknesses and knows how to exploit them if we allow him to do so. We can defend ourselves against his attacks and deceptions only by understanding the commandments and by fortifying ourselves each day through praying, studying the scriptures, and following the counsel of the Lord’s anointed.

Teach and bless others

I remind you brethren who bear the Melchizedek Priesthood that the seed of the present is the harvest of the future. I urge you, as fathers and as priesthood leaders, to focus more attention on teaching, guiding, and shepherding these young men, especially by example. The Lord has given you that obligation. Remember, the lambs have little chance of following the right path if the shepherd goes astray.

The Melchizedek Priesthood has been given to relatively few of our Heavenly Father's children. You have received it to magnify your callings in doing the Lord's work. You are to exercise the priesthood in setting the spiritual tone and building a spiritual foundation in your families. You brethren have a solemn duty to bless your wives, children, and other family members by the power and authority of the priesthood.

Marry at the proper time

I hope you single adult brethren will follow our prophet's admonition to marry at the proper time and will not procrastinate your opportunity to be a husband and father. That is the order of the gospel. President Benson meant what he said when he declared, "Understand that temple marriage is essential to your salvation and exaltation" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 58; or *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 51). I would add: better late than never. Many lovely, faithful women are waiting for this privilege. Do not disappoint them, the Lord, or yourselves. Do not fear the added responsibilities that come with marriage.

Use video media wisely

I believe that a noble priesthood bearer should have balance in his life. I have observed that some fathers spend too much time watching sports on television. This practice has almost become an addiction in today's world. It should never cause us to neglect family and Church duties. Television is out of control in some homes; the set is rarely turned off, regardless of the programming. Some programs are filthy and evil and are poisoning the minds of God's children today. Likewise, many movies and videotapes are blatantly corrupt and evil, making their viewers insensible to the promptings of the Spirit (see Helaman 4:24). Satan has made the television and film media among his most effective tools to destroy minds and souls.

Satan's influence on advertising

A good example of satanic influence is in television advertising for alcoholic beverages. Its underlying message seems to be that the sole object of life is to have a good time. This so-called fun-loving time comes to those who drink a certain brand of alcoholic beverage, they say. Brethren, that advertising message is false; it is an absolute lie fostered by the father of lies. Especially insidious, in my view, is the advertising for wine coolers, which are represented falsely as little more than delicious, fruit-flavored soft drinks. Beer consumption is represented as the thing to do in order to have a good time. Drinking alcoholic beverages does not bring the good things of life. Evidence mounts each passing day to prove the damaging, even disastrous effects of these substances on the human body and on society. The Word of Wisdom was valid when it was given in 1833. Through the years some have not accepted it, but scientific discoveries in our day have validated this great revelation.

Despite the concerns I have expressed, many uplifting and inspiring programs are available at little or no cost on television, film, and videotape. I speak for wisdom and balance in accepting the good and rejecting the evil.

Oppose gambling and lotteries

May I say a word about the moral ramifications of gambling. As it has in the past, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stands opposed to gambling, including government-sponsored lotteries.

Public lotteries are advocated as a means of relieving the burden of taxation. It has been clearly demonstrated, however, that all too often lotteries only add to the problem of the financially disadvantaged by taking money from them and giving nothing of value in return.

In several states in the United States next month, the lottery issue will be on the referendum ballot, and citizens in those states will be able to vote on the measure.

We urge members of the Church to join with others with similar concerns in opposing the legalization and government sponsorship of lotteries.

The priesthood lifts us

I pray that as bearers of the priesthood, we will follow the example of Peter, the Apostle whom the Savior selected to head his church. While Peter and John were going into the temple, a man who had been lame from birth and had been placed at a gate to the temple asked them for help. Apparently he expected to receive money. "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up" (Acts 3:6-7).

The phrase "lifted him up" is, to me, a key point in this miracle. That is what the priesthood does. To be lifted up in this sense means to "be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof" (Articles of Faith 1:5). You brethren can trace your priesthood authority directly to the Savior. The priesthood lifts us and enables us to do things far beyond our own unassisted abilities if we are worthy to exercise it. Also, it gives us the power and authority to lift others. In fact, it places on us the obligation to lift all who come under our influence, much as Peter lifted the afflicted man.

God speaks through latter-day prophets

The Lord has lifted up his prophets, both ancient and modern. The latter-day prophets, from Joseph Smith to President Ezra Taft Benson, are representatives of the Lord. The world may not recognize them, but God speaks through them. The doctrines of the Church are determined by revelations from God, not by councils out in the world.

A few weeks ago we visited the Sacred Grove near Palmyra, New York.

The experience was most inspirational as I walked on that holy ground. The Holy Ghost reconfirmed to me that the First Vision did occur, and, in the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith, "I saw two Persons, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

You brethren are entitled to call on the Lord for guidance just as Joseph Smith did in his fifteenth year. You should have the same quest for truth and the same desire to know what you should do and how you should act. Remember, he went into the grove and prayed for guidance to know for himself which church was right and how he would know it (see Joseph Smith—History 1:10-13).

The Church's mission

Brethren, the mission of the Church is much more than a lofty ideal conceived at Church headquarters. It should be a part of the personal mission of every member. Each one of us should incorporate into our lives the practice of inviting all to come unto Christ by "proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead" (Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 97; or *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 84). We must not let the demands of the world divert us from this sacred mission.

Ponder prophets' vital counsel

Key statements made by latter-day prophets are not trite clichés. They are vital counsel to us from the Lord through his prophets. We should ponder and act upon such statements as "No other success can compensate for failure in the home," by President David O. McKay (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, p. 5; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, p. 445); "The greatest of the Lord's work you brethren will ever do as fathers will be within the walls of your own home," by President Harold B. Lee (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 130; or *Ensign*, July

1973, p. 98); and "The Church is at a point in its growth and maturity when we are at last ready to move forward in a major way. . . . We have paused on some plateaus long enough. Let us resume our journey forward and upward" by President Spencer W. Kimball (in Conference Report, Apr. 1979, p. 114; or *Ensign*, May 1979, p. 82).

I bear my witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This is his church; he directs it through his prophets. Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Resto-

ration. President Ezra Taft Benson is the present prophet of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to listen to Elder Gene R. Cook, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Gene R. Cook

Dear brethren of the priesthood, I greet you this evening in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ with the sacred injunction, "Come unto Christ" (Moroni 10:32).

A divine commission to bring souls to God

I testify that the Lord expects us to bring souls unto Him by inviting all men to come unto Christ, and by so doing, find Him ourselves. It truly is "the thing . . . of the most worth unto you" (D&C 15:6). In fact, your very ordination is "to preach faith and repentance and remission of sins, according to [his] word" (D&C 53:3), "that you may bring souls unto [him]" (D&C 15:6). It is the greatest offering that man can give to God (see D&C 15:6, 29:7; Alma 17:11, 29:9). In fact, you "received [your] first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to [labor] for the salvation of the souls of men" (D&C 138:56). You cannot fail. That counsel applies to you young men as well.

Perhaps we are at the time in our ministry when, in preparation for the Lord's second coming, when with renewed emphasis, *in love*, we must call men to repentance (see D&C 6:9, 11:9, 18:14). We must invite them to "come unto Christ," testifying boldly in His name to bring the "mighty change" into the hearts of our people (see Mosiah 5:2, Alma 5:14).

The purpose of visits to homes

As Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood brethren, we are commissioned with a purpose to "visit the house of each member" (D&C 20:47)—

- To "exhort them to pray vocally and in secret" (D&C 20:47),
- "To stir them up in remembrance" of God (Alma 4:19), and
- To turn them "to the Lord with full purpose of heart" (Mosiah 7:33).

We do not visit the active just to "visit," or the less active just to get them out to church, although that may be part of what happens. In essence, we visit to help the heads of those homes, male or female, to become the spiritual leaders in their homes, to lead their families to Christ, to pray, to fast, and to read the scriptures together. If that happens in our visits, all else will take care of itself.

"A preparation to hear the word" (Alma 32:6; see also 33:22-23, 34:3)

How can we make such visits with power and authority, as described in the scriptures, especially to the less active? The most important element in our preparation is to humble ourselves mightily before God. We must be believing (see D&C 90:24, Mormon 9:27). We must not doubt or fear (see D&C 6:36).

We must pray fervently throughout our visits that we may "speak the thoughts that [the Lord] shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men; for it shall be given you . . . in the very moment, what ye shall say" (D&C 100:5-6), even "that portion that shall be meted unto every man" (D&C 84:85).

The results of these kinds of visits testify of themselves. For example:

- On a first visit, a man quits smoking after twenty-five years and prays to God to know the next step.
- A less-active man says, "I've been waiting for you."
- A wife tells of her less-active husband's dream that "messengers would be sent" and says, "We will believe whatever you tell us."
- An unscheduled phone call is made at a critical moment, touching a woman who was turning to inactivity.

Someone said, "Coincidences like these are God's little miracles wherein he desired to remain anonymous."

Suggestions for preparing men's hearts

Remember, not only the teacher but the learner must have the Spirit of the Lord. You, as the teacher, must do all in your power to *prepare the hearts of men* so the Spirit can teach. May I suggest seven scriptural performances (see Alma 31:10) that, if humbly employed, will immediately invite the Spirit into your heart and the hearts of others. You may want to write them down.

1. Pray. Pray for the Spirit. Ask those you teach to pray for you and for themselves while you are teaching. Ask for discernment to understand the needs of those you visit (see 3 Nephi 17:2-3, 20:1; D&C 136:29, 32). For example:

- During a visit, upon bended knee, two priesthood leaders pray that a wayward daughter will be blessed. Her parents are touched by the prayer and repent that very evening. They begin to attend church and a temple preparation seminar and now have been sealed as a family.

- A seven-year-old responds to his less-active father, who says he won't pray, with "Please pray, Dad. Take Mom

and me to the temple." That family has since been sealed.

2. Use the scriptures. They are the words of the Lord to us, and the Spirit of the Lord will speak through them to all, both young and old (see 2 Nephi 32:3, Alma 31:5, D&C 32:4). For example:

- In one of the visits, a testimony is given of a verse relating to baptism. An investigator says, "I do believe God sent you. I'll be baptized."

- A scripture is read on another visit about multiplying and replenishing the earth. A young couple with one child humbly confesses their unrighteous decision to have no more children.

3. Testify. If you follow His promptings, the Lord will direct you to testify frequently throughout these visits. Testify that the Lord has sent you. As you do, "the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men" (2 Nephi 33:1; see also Alma 5:44-47). Let me again illustrate:

- In his testimony, a priesthood leader unknowingly quotes a sentence verbatim from a sister's patriarchal blessing.

- Another visit: one member testifies to a couple of life after death from the scriptures only to learn later of the recent loss of their little one.

4. Use music. Using recorded hymns or singing the songs of Zion with or to the Saints in their homes, as prompted, will always bring the Spirit of the Lord (see D&C 25:12, Matthew 26:30, Colossians 3:16, 1 Samuel 16:23). For example:

- A priesthood leader said with a smile, "I could never sing, I have a terrible voice. But we were prompted to do so. My voice was as the voice of an angel." The less-active man wept and returned to the Church.

- A home teacher said, "I sang with his children. The crusty old fellow cried and humbled himself for the first time in years."

5. Express love and gratitude to God and man. Express love openly for God and for His children, and the Spirit will be felt profoundly (see John 13:34-35, 1 Nephi 11:21-23, Moroni 7:47-48). Let me illustrate:

- Touched by the spirit of a visit, a less-active teenager expresses love for his parents, by whose love his heart is turned to God.

- A priesthood leader expresses love to a dissident group of less-active members, and twenty return to sacrament meeting that same day.

6. *Share spiritual experiences.* Spiritual experiences have great impact upon men's souls. Share them as prompted by the Spirit (see D&C 50:21-22, Luke 10:25-37, Acts 26:1-32). For example:

- A less-active husband tells two priesthood leaders of last night's dream. He repents that very evening as he recounts the experience.

- Two priesthood leaders tell an inspiring missionary story. As a result, two less-active sons are now serving missions.

7. *Perform priesthood ordinances.* "In the ordinances . . . , the power of godliness is manifest" (D&C 84:20). Bless the Saints. Bless the sick. Bless the homes of the Saints. Encourage others to seek for priesthood blessings (see 3 Nephi 20:2-9). For example:

- In an unscheduled visit by an institute director, a blessing is received by a college woman who has strayed into transgression. She is caused to remember God and returns to the institute.

- Another man is raised directly from his sickbed.

- A daughter receives a priesthood blessing and finds the peace that has eluded her since her father's death.

Brethren, these seven suggestions—one or more as needed—will always bring the Spirit of the Lord into your visits. Are these not some of the *spiritual gifts* that Christ gave that prepared the way for the Holy Ghost to testify and *change men's hearts?* Spiritually give of yourself, and your visits will not then be routine, but you will discern the needs of the Saints. You will commit them in the Spirit to act. They will repent and come unto Christ.

Yes, it's true, there are a few sheep who will not respond to their Master's voice, who are not willing at this time—

and I repeat, *at this time*—to respond, because Jesus taught that He could only "bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance" (D&C 18:12; italics added).

With those souls, we just go on loving them and try again at a later time when they may have a more repentant heart and will respond to the Spirit (see 3 Nephi 18:32).

A sister's visit

May I share a personal experience of my wife. While on a stake conference assignment with me, she accompanied a Relief Society president on such a visit. As shepherds and servants of the Lord, they had tremendous success.

Then, about a year later while I was teaching some priesthood brethren how to make such visits, a 35-year-old man told me of my wife's visit a year ago and said: "May I tell you a secret? My entire family had decided the day before your wife came to visit that we were leaving the Church, offended, never to return. I bear witness to you that we felt the Lord speak through her as she stirred us up in remembrance of God and our ordinances. I'm a member of a bishopric now. I would not be here today if it were not for her."

He then smiled and said, "How I wish now that I had more carefully watched her invite the Spirit upon me and my family, as it now falls upon me to go out tonight and do my very first home visit."

Yes, brethren, the sisters can assist in this work also.

The divine motivation

May I then summarize:

1. We are to be instruments in the Lord's hands to bring souls to Christ. Perhaps this is the greatest gift one man can bestow upon another.

2. We must better *relearn* how to invite the Spirit of the Lord for such an endeavor, even humbling self "to the dust" (Alma 34:38).

3. The process described works for all men, young and old, who qualify with "faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God" (D&C 4:5). You young men, encourage your fathers and companions to hold such visits. You have a right to be shown how, and to motivate and teach us as well.

4. Remember, these suggestions are not meant to change the processes for home teaching, visiting teaching, or auxiliary visits, but are a suggested *means* for bringing the Spirit into all such visits.

5. The process described for inviting the Spirit works the same with—

- a rebellious child at home,
- a discouraged individual,
- an associate, and
- even yourself,
- as well as in visits to homes.

6. Let us commit as one leader did: "There will not be one less-active member who has turned from God in my quorum or class. I will do all in my power to see that mighty change come into his heart."

In conclusion, may I remind each of us that our motivation must not be just for duty, for the Church, or as a result of a calling we have, but our *divine motivation* must be for the love of God. Then will the miraculous results occur.

I bear witness from the Book of Mormon that *for our labor*, we will—

- "Wax strong in the Spirit, . . .

- "Teach with power and authority from God" (Mosiah 18:26),

- "Receive the grace of God" (v. 26), and

- Be restored unto the grace we once had (see Helaman 12:24).

And then, with that grace or enabling power of God, we might thereby obtain charity (see Ether 12:34, 36), "even the pure love of Christ" (Moroni 7:47).

May that gift, even charity, be ours. May we give of ourselves to the spiritually needy the spiritual gifts Christ gave. I know of no greater joy that can come to man than "the soul that repente[n]" (D&C 18:13; see also vs. 15–16). May the Lord bless us to learn how to bring men to Christ, and, in the process, *find Him ourselves*. I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Gene R. Cook of the First Quorum of the Seventy has just spoken to us. We shall now invite the four brethren who were sustained this afternoon as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy to each give us a few words of testimony or whatever they wish to say as they are guided by the Spirit: Elder Monte J. Brough, Elder Albert Choules, Jr., Elder Lloyd P. George, and Elder Gerald E. Melchin, in that order, please.

Elder Monte J. Brough

I can tell you now, after about a hundred minutes of experience, that these big red chairs are not really as comfortable as they look.

On Thursday afternoon, my family and I were celebrating my child's birthday at a rather loud and noisy gathering in our home when the phone rang. A woman's voice said, "Brother Monte Brough, would you hold the phone a moment? President Hinckley would like to speak with you."

I said, "President Hinckley!" in order to gain some attention from my rather raucous family. They quieted rather quickly, I can tell you.

President Hinckley came on the phone and said, "Brother Brough, would it be convenient for you to come and see me?"

In a rather stilted way, I responded for a moment or two to a couple of questions, then said, "President Hinckley, you have given me a rather frightening phone call."

He said, "Oh, don't worry about it. We're just going to give you a new broom and let you sweep the steps in front of the office building."

President Hinckley, I want you and these Brethren to know that I would be honored to take up that broom and sweep those steps where you have walked, where President Benson has walked, and where all these men whom I admire and love with all my heart have walked.

Mothers' love

A few years ago while I was presiding over the mission in Minneapolis, Minnesota, an interesting event took place. I would like to use that experience to bear my testimony. A rather severe tornado hit the area. It was severe enough that it came to the attention of the nightly news broadcast over the national networks to California, Arizona, Utah, and Idaho. Before long, the telephone started ringing in our office there at the mission home. This went on for two or three hours, with parents calling from many areas wondering about their Johnny or Richard.

I recall later walking across the parking lot from the mission office to the mis-

sion home saying to myself, "You know these Mormon mothers. They just won't undo the apron strings. They just won't let their boys go." As I walked into the mission home, the phone again was ringing. I picked up the phone and guess who? My mother! She was wondering how her missionary was doing under these circumstances.

I learned a great and deep lesson. A mother's love and concern never ceases —nor should it.

I have no memory of my father. I was not raised in a home where the priesthood was strong. A bishop in Randolph, Utah, and mission presidents later on are responsible for my being here tonight.

A willing heart

In reference to Elder Marvin J. Ashton's talk, I have work to do on my heart—but one thing I do have is a willing heart. I am willing to do anything and everything that I can to help in this great cause. I bear witness that I know this is God's work. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Albert Choules, Jr.

I remember sitting in this hall years ago and listening to Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., give his first talk in a general conference. His first words were, "This is a traumatic experience for a convert." Elder Rector, this is not an insignificant experience for one born and reared in the Church, either. I am grateful for that rearing.

Last Wednesday I was in Idaho and telephoned to Phoenix and learned that President Hinckley was trying to reach me. I called him that morning and made an appointment to see him Thursday afternoon. Wednesday afternoon I joined with other members of my family at the

funeral of my mother, who had passed away here in Salt Lake City the previous Sunday at the age of ninety-five. She joined my father, who had preceded her twenty-two years ago, and my wife, who had joined him four years ago.

I am grateful for them. I have prayed since Thursday afternoon that a kind and loving Heavenly Father would let them who had been such an influence in bringing me to this position be aware of it. I am confident they were.

Choose the Church

I remember as a young boy about to receive the priesthood my father calling

me to him and saying, "Albert, if you ever have to choose between me and the Church, choose the Church." Thankfully, I never had to make such a choice. As my own sons reached that same age, I gave them the same charge.

I promised President Hinckley on Thursday afternoon, and now tonight I would like to do so again to the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and these other Brethren that I desire to dedicate my all and serve to whatever extent I am asked.

Importance of priesthood ordinances

Four years ago I began service in the Mesa Arizona Temple as a sealer. During these years, I have had an opportunity to

gain a greater appreciation, understanding, and testimony of the exalting ordinances of the priesthood. That service, on the heels of a delightful three-year mission experience in New York City, has taught me the importance of the priesthood and its ordinances and the eternal nature thereof.

I bear you my witness that I know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, that this is the Church of Jesus Christ. My current wife, my bride of fifteen months, has promised that with Rosemary, my first wife, pulling for me on the other side of the veil, and with her pulling for me on this side, I will succeed. I know that with the help of the Lord I will succeed. To him I promise to give my all, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Lloyd P. George

Prepare to be chosen

On a number of occasions, President Harold B. Lee stated that there is no need for a new organization to take care of the needs of the Saints. All we need to do is to have the priesthood of the Lord go to work.

Brethren of the priesthood, we have a great responsibility. We have a great task. We have all been called. But have we been chosen? If we don't feel that way, we probably have not been chosen. The Lord has been explicit in his direction for us in preparing ourselves. In Revelation he says:

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (3:19-20).

That is the direction, my priesthood brethren.

A conversion story

Two of our missionaries knocked on a door one day. It was opened by a man in

his seventies. He said, "No, I don't think I am interested, but let me ask my sister and my mother. They may want to talk to you." He was in his seventies, his sister was in her eighties, and their mother was ninety-nine.

The missionaries taught them, and a baptismal date was set. Mother became so excited and happy that she ended up in the hospital. So another baptismal date was set. Now, this is the important thing. In the testimony meeting after Mother was baptized, she said, "I have been waiting eighty years for this. When I was twenty years old, the missionaries taught me, but they did not invite me to enter the waters of baptism. How happy I am for this day." She had reached her one-hundredth birthday when she was baptized.

I am so humbled and so grateful for the calling that has come to me and for the love and the respect that I feel from all of the chosen Apostles and prophets of our Heavenly Father. I feel a great spirit of brotherhood and love for each of these Brethren seated here on the stand this day. I support and sustain this great prophet and those associated with him and pray humbly that the Lord will direct

me and bless me with those things that are needful and necessary that I might magnify my calling in the priesthood.

May we all have the desire to accomplish this so there will be no one that will

be able to say, as is recorded in Psalms, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul" (142:4). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Gerald E. Melchin

When you receive a call from the Office of the First Presidency or one of the Counselors in the First Presidency, your whole life rolls over. I can't think of words to express the thoughts that have been in my mind and in my heart since I visited with President Monson on Friday. As I thought about addressing you tonight, I felt so humbled and yet so honored, so privileged to be able to bear my witness of the Savior to the priesthood of the Church throughout the world. What an honor that is.

Expression of gratitude

I owe the Lord so much because he has blessed me so much. I pray that I can sustain the Brethren in the calls that may be given me, that I might perform in a way that I might partially repay the Lord for those choice blessings. He has seen to it that I have had the blessings that are most important in life. I have had a choice companion with whom I've had a special association of love. She has sustained me throughout all of my activities, as I have tried to sustain her. I think right now her mind is as muddled as mine as we try to make the adjustments that will be coming into our lives. I have been blessed with a family of whom I am proud and who are serving the Lord. I don't know what else you can ask of our Father in Heaven that is of so much worth. I know, too, that they will have to make some changes, as we will not be living as close together as we have been, but I know that they will sustain me in the call and will make the adjustments that are necessary.

I think of two missionaries who came to my grandfather in the 1920s in

Kitchener, Ontario. There were no LDS people in the city. They'd been discouraged, and as they passed his door, they heard a song playing that had been played at their farewell. They approached the door to listen, and he saw them. They introduced the gospel to his heart. He joined the Church, and so all of my life I've been blessed to know that the gospel is true and that we have a prophet who guides and directs us.

Prophets' works are of heaven

I think of the words of the Master to the multitude about the prophetic calling of John the Baptist. He said: "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? . . . A man clothed in soft raiment?" (Matthew 11:7-8). Then he declared that John was a prophet "and more than a prophet," for "all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:9, 13).

On another occasion he asked the scribes and Pharisees who had been questioning him, "The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?" (Mark 11:30). Of course, the works of John, as of all prophets, were of heaven.

As I have read the scriptures, I have watched all of the prophets who have affected my life, and I have seen that they have fulfilled the role that the Master described. I have been privileged to have President Benson in my home as one of us. I have knelt with him as we have called, by prophecy, a stake president. I have felt his divine call as he leads and directs this church through the spirit of revelation. And I bear that testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We will now all join together in singing "Do What Is Right." And following that, we shall hear from President

Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

The choir and congregation sang "Do What Is Right."

President Thomas S. Monson

Sportsmanship: a goal beyond victory

Years ago, many of us participated as players or observers in the all-Church basketball tournaments and later in the softball tournaments. The most coveted prize was not to be adjudged first-place winner, but rather to receive the sportsmanship award. The applause of the audience was louder and longer, the smiles broader and more universal. A goal beyond victory had been won.

Lately we have received at the Office of the First Presidency letters which tell of serious arguments on the sports floor or playing field, name-calling by parents, abuse of referees, and all that characterizes poor sportsmanship. We have room for improvement, brethren, and improve we must.

Purpose of church sports activities

In the videotape produced by the Church and entitled *The Church Sports Official*, there is featured this truth from the First Presidency: "Church sports activities have a unique central purpose much higher than the development of physical prowess, or even victory itself. It is to strengthen faith, build integrity, and develop in each participant the attributes of his maker."

Brethren, it is difficult to achieve this objective if winning overshadows participation. The recreation halls in our many buildings are constructed through the tithes of the members of the Church. It is only fair that all worthy young men and young women have an opportunity to play, to learn, to develop, and to achieve.

It is not our objective to produce clones of Larry Bird or Magic Johnson—or even John Wooden or Pat Riley. *When you put a player in a suit, put him in the game.* Basketball begins soon. Let our teams of young men and young women be counseled appropriately. And a word or two for the spectators and coaches would not be amiss.

It's only a game

If I might add a personal touch, I share with you an experience that embarrassed, a game that was lost, and a lesson in not taking ourselves too seriously.

First, in a basketball game when the outcome was in doubt, the coach sent me onto the playing floor right after the second half began. I took an in-bounds pass, dribbled the ball toward the key, and let the shot fly. Just as the ball left my fingertips, I realized why the opposing guards did not attempt to stop my drive: I was shooting for the wrong basket! I offered a silent prayer: "Please, Father, don't let that ball go in." The ball rimmed the hoop and fell out.

From the bleachers came the call: "We want Monson, we want Monson, we want Monson—out!" The coach obliged.

I never was a basketball star. What timing—to be a freshman at the University of Utah when All-Americans Arnie Ferrin and Vern Gardner dominated the boards.

I fared much better at fast-pitch softball. My most memorable experience in softball was a thirteen-inning game I pitched in Salt Lake City on a hot Memorial Day. The game was scheduled for just

seven innings, but the tied score could not be broken. In the last of the thirteenth, with two men out and a runner on third, the batter hit a high pop fly to left field. The catch was certain, I thought. And yet the ball fell through the hands of the left fielder. For thirty-eight years I have teased my friend who dropped the ball. I have promised myself I will never do so again. I'm not even going to mention his name. After all, he, too, remembers. It was only a game.

On another occasion, while pitching a game at Pioneer Park, I was absolutely stunned to see that the other team had placed a one-armed batter at the plate. Now how does a pitcher deliver the pitch to such an opponent? I tossed a gentle lob over the plate. To my amazement, the batter knocked a single, right over the second baseman's head. My temper flared. The next batter was a returned missionary from Mexico, Homer Proctor, six foot two and about 210 pounds. I pitched him fast, high, and inside. On the first pitch, he lifted the ball right out of the park for a home run. I shall ever remember the smile of that one-armed runner, Bernell Hales, as he passed second and third and gleefully streaked for home. I felt like crying, but I broke out laughing, as did each player on both sides. We had a wonderful time.

Brethren, let's take the necessary steps to rekindle sportsmanship, to emphasize participation, and to strive for the development of a Christlike character in each individual.

Caring for the needy

Now, there are other phases of the Lord's work in which all members can participate, in which the growth of character is assured and the promise of life eternal bestowed. One such endeavor is referred to as the welfare program. Actually, the language of King Benjamin from the book of Mosiah provides a perfect scriptural description, even a solemn charge to each of us:

"For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would

that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally" (Mosiah 4:26).

Give a generous fast offering

President Marion G. Romney spoke concerning the funding of caring for the needy when he said: "It has been, and now is, the desire and the objective of the Church to obtain from fast offerings the necessary funds to meet the cash needs of the welfare program. . . . At the present time we are not meeting this objective. We can, we ought, and we must do better. If we will double our fast offerings, we shall increase our own prosperity, both spiritually and temporally. This the Lord has promised, and this has been the record" ("Basics of Church Welfare," address delivered to the Priesthood Board, 6 Mar. 1974, p. 10).

Are we generous in the payment of our fast offerings? That we should be so was taught by President Joseph F. Smith. He declared that it is incumbent upon every Latter-day Saint to give to his bishop on fast day an amount equivalent to the food that he and his family would consume for the day and, if possible, a liberal donation to be so reserved and donated to the poor (see *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1902, p. 148).

President Spencer W. Kimball suggested that, in our generosity, we go beyond a minimum amount. He urged that we "give, instead of the amount we saved by our two meals of fasting, perhaps much, much more—ten times more where we are in a position to do it" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, p. 184).

Saints' response to crises

The generous response of the Latter-day Saints in times of crisis is legendary. Many will remember the emergency aid provided our needy Saints in Europe following World War II. President Ezra Taft Benson directed this effort.

More recently, this generosity helped to avert starvation in Africa. Irrigation projects, producing wells, and improved agricultural methods are all part of a dream come true. Similarly, at the time of the Teton Dam disaster in Idaho, the response of the members to the call of need was overwhelming.

"In mine own way"

Today, in lands far away and right here in Salt Lake City, there are those who suffer hunger, who know want and are acquainted with poverty. Ours is the opportunity and the sacred privilege to relieve this hunger, to meet this want, to eliminate this poverty.

The Lord provided the way when He declared, "And the storehouse shall be kept by the consecrations of the church; and widows and orphans shall be provided for, as also the poor" (D&C 83:6). Then the reminder, "But it must needs be done in mine own way" (D&C 104:16).

Church welfare service

In the vicinity where I once lived and served, we operated a poultry project. Most of the time it was an efficiently operated project, supplying to the storehouse thousands of dozens of fresh eggs and hundreds of pounds of dressed poultry. On a few occasions, however, the experience of being volunteer city farmers provided not only blisters on the hands, but also frustration of heart and mind.

For instance, I shall ever remember the time we gathered together the Aaronic Priesthood young men to really give the project a spring cleaning treatment. Our enthusiastic and energetic throng assembled at the project and in a speedy fashion uprooted, gathered, and burned large quantities of weeds and debris. By the light of the glowing bonfires, we ate hot dogs and congratulated ourselves on a job well done. The project was now neat and tidy. However, there was just one disastrous problem: The noise and the fires had so disturbed the fragile and temperamental population of five thousand laying

hens that most of them went into a sudden molt and ceased laying. Thereafter we tolerated a few weeds, that we might produce more eggs.

No member of the Church who has canned peas, topped beets, hauled hay, or watered corn in such a cause ever forgets or regrets the experience of helping provide for those in need.

A widow serves Elijah

Sharing with others that which we have is not new to our generation. We need but to turn to the account found in 1 Kings to appreciate anew the principle that when we follow the counsel of the Lord, when we care for those in need, the outcome benefits all. There we read that a most severe drought had gripped the land. Famine followed. Elijah the prophet received from the Lord what to him must have been an amazing instruction: "Get thee to Zarephath . . . : behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee" (17:9). When he had found the widow, Elijah declared:

"Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

"And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand" (vs. 10-11).

Her response described her pathetic situation as she explained that she was preparing a final and scanty meal for her son and for herself, and then they would die (see v. 12).

How implausible to her must have been Elijah's response:

"Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

"For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

"And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail"

(vs. 13-16). This is the faith that has ever motivated and inspired the welfare plan of the Lord.

Avoid unreasonable debt

Industry, thrift, self-reliance continue as guiding principles of this effort. As a people, we should avoid unreasonable debt. In a message which Elder Ezra Taft Benson delivered at a general conference more than thirty years ago, he instructed:

"In the book of Kings we read about a woman who came weeping to . . . the prophet [of the Lord]. Her husband had died, and she owed a debt that she could not pay; and the creditor was on his way to take her two sons and sell them as slaves.

"By a miracle [the prophet] Elisha enabled her to acquire a goodly supply of oil. And he said to her:

"'Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live' " (in Conference Report, Apr. 1957, p. 53).

"Pay thy debt, and live" (2 Kings 4:7). What wise counsel for us today! Remember, the wisdom of God may appear as foolishness to men, but the greatest single lesson we can learn in mortality is that when God speaks and a man obeys, that man will always be right.

Provide for your family's needs

We should remember that the best storehouse system would be for every family to have a year's supply of needed food, clothing, and, where possible, the other necessities of life. In the early Church, Paul wrote to Timothy, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8).

It is our sacred duty to care for our families. Often we see what might be called "parent neglect." Too frequently the emotional, social, and, in some instances, even the material essentials of life are not provided by children to their aged parents. This is displeasing to the Lord.

Guidelines for bishops

The Lord's storehouse includes the time, talents, skills, compassion, consecrated material, and financial means of faithful Church members. These resources are available to the bishop in assisting those in need. Our bishops have the responsibility to learn how to use properly these resources.

May I suggest in summary form five basic guidelines:

1. A bishop is to seek out the poor, as the Lord has commanded, and administer to their needs.

2. In caring for the needy, a bishop exercises discernment, sound judgment, balance, and compassion. Church resources represent a sacred trust.

3. Those receiving welfare assistance are to work to the extent of their ability for that which is received.

4. The assistance given by the bishop is temporary, rather than ongoing.

5. The bishop assists with basic life-sustaining goods and services. He sustains lives rather than life-styles.

Let me illustrate with a sacred experience which brought these guidelines together in blessing the lives of those in need.

While serving as a bishop, one cold winter day I visited an elderly couple who lived in a two-room duplex. The modest home was heated by a small coal-burning Heatrola. As I approached the home, I met the 82-year-old husband, his aged body bent in the driving snow as he gathered a few pieces of wet coal from his exposed supply of fuel. I helped him with his burden but made a solemn resolve to do more.

I prayed and pondered, seeking a solution. Step by step the inspiration came. In the ward was an unemployed carpenter. He had no fuel for his furnace but was too proud to receive the stoker slack he needed to keep his house warm. I suggested to the carpenter a way he could work for the help he received. Would he build a coal shed for a couple in need? "Of course," he replied.

Now where were we to obtain the materials? I approached the proprietors of

a local lumberyard from whom we frequently purchased products. I remember saying to the men, "How would the two of you like to paint a bright spot on your souls this winter day?" Not knowing exactly what I meant, they agreed readily. They were invited to donate the lumber and hardware for the coal shed.

Within days the project was completed. I was invited to inspect the outcome. The coal shed was simply beautiful in its sleek covering of battleship-gray paint. The carpenter, who was a high priest, testified that he had actually felt inspired as he labored on this modest shed.

My older friend, with obvious appreciation, stroked the wall of the sturdy structure. He pointed out to me the wide door, the shiny hinges, and then opened to my view the supply of dry coal which filled the shed. In a voice filled with emotion, he said in words I shall ever treasure, "Bishop, take a look at the finest coal shed a man ever had." Its beauty was only surpassed by the pride in the builder's heart. And the elderly recipient labored each day at the ward chapel, dusting the benches, vacuuming the carpet runners, arranging the hymnbooks. He, too, worked for that which he had received.

Once again, the welfare plan of the Lord had blessed the lives of His children.

Remember the poor and the needy

May our Heavenly Father guide the priesthood of this church, that we may be obedient to the revelation of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph in which we are charged to "remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the af-

flicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple" (D&C 52:40).

We will qualify as His disciples when we hear and heed the counsel from Isaiah describing the true fast, the spirit and the promise of the welfare effort:

"Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward.

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. . . .

"And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, . . . and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (58:7-9, 11).

May this be our blessing is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Benson, who gave a wonderful message this morning in opening conference, has indicated that he will not speak this evening. We are honored with his presence and express to him our great love and loyalty as his brethren in the priesthood. He has asked that I speak to you at this time.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Power of united priesthood bearers

My beloved brethren of the priesthood, I look into the faces of you many thousands who are assembled here in the

Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. This magnificent old building is filled to capacity. Then I realize that there are tens of thousands of others like you who are meeting in various church

halls across the continent and in other areas of the world. I sense the great strength that can come of our unity. There is little we cannot accomplish if we will go forward with united hearts to do so.

I sense the strength of the homes where you brethren preside as worthy husbands and fathers, and where you boys live as sons blessed with the Aaronic Priesthood. I am grateful for your faith and prayers, for your loyalty and love, for your steadfastness and devotion. You become a great witness for the truth and validity of this work. There is nothing like it in all the earth—hundreds of thousands of men who speak in different tongues, but all of whom are ordained to the priesthood of God with authority to speak in His sacred name.

I remember when President J. Reuben Clark, as a counselor in the First Presidency, would stand at this pulpit and plead for unity among the priesthood. I think he was not asking that we give up our individual personalities and become as robots cast from a single mold. I am confident he was not asking that we cease to think, to meditate, to ponder as individuals. I think he was telling us that if we are to assist in moving forward the work of God, we must carry in our hearts a united conviction concerning the great basic foundation stones of our faith, including the truth and validity of the First Vision as the record of this singular event is found in the history of Joseph Smith; of the truth and validity of the Book of Mormon as a voice speaking from the dust in testimony of Jesus the Christ, an ancient record written by inspired prophets and brought forth in this the dispensation of the fulness of times by the gift and power of God; of the reality and power of the priesthood which was restored under the hands of those who held it anciently—John the Baptist in the case of the Aaronic Priesthood, and Peter, James, and John in the case of the Melchizedek Priesthood. If we are to assist in moving forward the work of God, we must carry in our hearts a united conviction that the ordinances and covenants of this work are eternal and everlasting in their consequences; that this kingdom was

established in the earth through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith and that every man who has succeeded him in the office of President has been and is a prophet of the living God; and that there is incumbent upon each of us an obligation to live and teach the gospel as interpreted and taught by the prophet of our day. If we will be united in these basic and fundamental elements, this work will continue to grow in power and strength to touch for good the whole world. Of that I am satisfied and bear solemn testimony.

Bishops

Now, this evening I desire to talk with you concerning the bishops of the Church, many of whom are present.

A young man said to me one day, "Do you belong to a ward and have a bishop?" I replied, "Of course I do." He asked further, "Do you attend tithing settlement with your local ward bishop?" I replied that I do, that I, even though serving as a member of the Presidency of the Church, have an accountability to my local ward bishop just as every other man and woman in this church is accountable either to a bishop or to a branch president.

He was somewhat amazed. I was surprised to think that he would even raise such questions. I thought of the genius of the Lord's work and the wisdom of the organization of His church. I have heard President Benson speak with appreciation for his bishop. I feel a kinship with my bishop. I hope that each of you feels similarly.

We have more than eleven thousand bishops in the Church. Every one is a man who has been called by the spirit of prophecy and revelation and set apart and ordained by the laying on of hands. Every one of them holds the keys of the presidency of his ward. Each is a high priest, the presiding high priest of his ward. Each carries tremendous responsibilities of stewardship. Each stands as a father to his people.

None receives money for his service. No ward bishop is compensated by the Church for his work as a bishop.

Requirements of a bishop

The requirements of a bishop today are as they were in the days of Paul, who wrote to Timothy:

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

"Not given to wine, no striker [that is, not a bully or a violent person], . . . not a brawler, not covetous;

"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

"(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:2-6).

In his letter to Titus, Paul adds that "a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; . . .

"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:7, 9).

Those words aptly describe a bishop today in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I saw all of those elements in the life of the bishop of the ward in which I grew up. He served for a quarter of a century. The ward over which he presided had more than eleven hundred members, but he seemed to know and love us all. He was our friend, our counselor, our presiding officer, our confidante, our teacher. He knew us boys by our first names and so addressed us. We respectfully addressed him as "Bishop." He was no martinet who ruled with a heavy hand. He could laugh with us. He could sympathize with us. He understood us, and we knew it. We knew also that he loved us.

Since then I have had a number of bishops. They have been men who have come from different backgrounds, varied in their natures and personalities, but every one has been a wonderful man, dedicated to his work and to the people of his ward.

Men of integrity

Let me now speak directly to the thousands of bishops who are in attendance tonight. Let me say first that I love you for your integrity and goodness. You *must* be men of integrity. You must stand as examples to the congregations over which you preside. You must stand on higher ground, so that you can lift others. You must be absolutely honest for you handle the funds of the Lord, the tithes of the people, the offerings that come of their fasting, and the contributions which they make from their own strained resources. How great is your trust as the keepers of the purse of the Lord!

Your goodness must be as an ensign to your people. Your morals must be impeccable. The wiles of the adversary may be held before you because he knows that if he can destroy you, he can injure an entire ward. You must be wise with inspired wisdom in all of your relationships lest someone read into your observed actions some taint of moral sin. You cannot succumb to the temptation to read pornographic literature, to see pornographic films, even in the secrecy of your own chamber to view pornographic videotapes. Your moral strength must be such that if ever you are called upon to sit in judgment on the questionable morals of others, you may do so without personal compromise or embarrassment.

You cannot use your office as bishop to further your own business interests lest through some ensuing financial mishap accusation be placed against you by those who succumbed to your persuasiveness.

A common judge in Israel

You cannot compromise your qualifications to sit as a common judge in Israel. It is a fearsome and awesome responsibility to stand as a judge of the people. You must be their judge in some instances as to worthiness to hold membership in the Church, worthiness to enter the house of the Lord, worthiness to be baptized, worthiness to receive the priest-

hood, worthiness to teach and to serve as officers in the organizations. You must be the judge of their eligibility in times of distress to receive help from the fast offerings of the people and commodities from the storehouse of the Lord. None for whom you are responsible must go hungry or without clothing or shelter though they be reluctant to ask. You must know something of the circumstances of all of the flock over whom you preside.

A counselor and comforter

You must be their counselor, their comforter, their anchor and strength in times of sorrow and distress. You must be strong with that strength which comes from the Lord. You must be wise with that wisdom which comes from the Lord. Your door must be open to hear their cries and your back strong to carry their burdens, your heart sensitive to judge their needs, your godly love broad enough and strong enough to encompass even the wrongdoer and the critic. You must be a man of patience, willing to listen though it takes hours to do so. You are the only one to whom some can turn. You must be there when every other source has failed. Permit me to read you a few lines from a letter sent to a bishop.

"Dear Bishop:

"It has been almost two years since I desperately called you asking for help. At that time I was ready to kill myself. I had no one else to turn to—no money, no job, no friends. My house had been taken, and I had no place to live. The Church was my last hope.

"As you know, I had left the Church at the age of seventeen and had broken just about every rule and commandment that there was in my search for happiness and fulfillment. Instead of happiness, my life was filled with misery, anguish, and despair. There was no hope or future for me. I even pleaded with God to let me die, to take me out of my misery. Not even he wanted me. I felt that he had rejected me, too.

"That's when I turned to you and the Church. . . .

"You listened with understanding, you counseled, you guided, you helped.

"I began to grow and develop in understanding and knowledge of the gospel. I found that I had to make certain basic changes in my life that were terribly difficult, but that within me I had the worth and strength to do so.

"I learned that as I lived the gospel and repented, I had no more fear. I was filled with an inner peace. The clouds of anguish and despair were gone. Because of the Atonement, my weaknesses and sins were forgiven through Jesus Christ and His love for me.

"He has blessed and strengthened me. He has opened pathways for me, given me direction, and kept me from harm. I have found that as I overcame each obstacle, my business began to grow, enabling my family to benefit and making me feel as though I had accomplished something.

"Bishop, you have given me understanding and support through these past two years. I never would have reached this point if not for your love and patience. Thank you for being what you are as the servant of the Lord to help me, his wandering child."

A watchman on the tower

You stand as a watchman on the tower of the ward over which you preside. There are many teachers in that ward. But you must be the chief teacher among them. You must see that there is no false doctrine creeping in among the people. You must see that they grow in faith and testimony, in integrity and righteousness and a sense of service. You must see that their love for the Lord strengthens and manifests itself in greater love for one another.

You must be their confessor, privy to their deepest secrets, holding absolutely inviolate the confidences placed in you. Yours is a privileged communication that must be guarded and respected against all intruders. There may be temptations to tell. You cannot succumb.

The presiding high priest

You as an individual preside over the Aaronic Priesthood of the ward. You are their leader, their teacher, their example, whether you wish to be such or not. You are the presiding high priest, the father to the ward family, to be called upon as arbiter in disagreements, as defender of the accused.

You preside in meetings where the doctrine is taught. You are accountable for the spiritual nature of those meetings and for the administration of the sacrament to the members, that all may be reminded of sacred covenants and obligations incumbent upon those who have taken upon them the name of the Lord.

A strong friend

You must stand as the strong friend of the widow and the orphan, the weak and the beleaguered, the attacked and the helpless.

The sound of your trumpet must be certain and unequivocal. In your ward you stand as the head of the army of the Lord, leading them on to victory in the conquest against sin, indifference, and apostasy.

Wisdom beyond your strength

I know that the work is hard at times. There are never enough hours to get it done. The calls are numerous and frequent. You have other things to do. That is true. You must not rob your employer of the time and energy that are rightfully his. You must not rob your family of time which belongs to them. But as most of you have come to know, as you seek for divine guidance, you are blessed with wisdom beyond your own and strength and capacity you did not know you had. It is possible to budget your time so that you neglect neither your employer, your family, nor your flock.

The most rewarding service

God bless the bishops of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You

may on occasion be inclined to complain about the burdens of your office. But you also know the joys of your service. Heavy as the load may be, you know this is the sweetest, the most rewarding, the most important thing you have ever done. You know that yours is the power to shape young lives, yours the right to recommend for missions, yours the authority to open the doors of the temple to your people, yours the calling to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and minister to those in distress, yours the obligation to teach and lead and inspire, yours the mandate to judge with equity and truth and mete out with love and understanding, with charity and faith.

I thank the Lord for you. I thank the Lord for good bishops in this Church throughout the world. I pray for you, all eleven thousand of you. I plead with you to be strong. I plead with you to be true. I plead with you to be uncompromising in your own lives and in the goals you set for others. Though your days be long and wearisome, may your rest be sweet, and in your hearts may you know that peace which comes alone from God to those who serve Him through service to His children.

Memories of a bishop

I again look back to the bishop of my boyhood. He was there when I was given a name and a blessing by my good father. He it was who interviewed me and found me worthy of baptism into the Lord's church. He it was who interviewed me and found me worthy to be ordained a deacon. He called me to my first Church responsibility as a member of the presidency of the deacons quorum. He it was who presided over the quorum of priests to which I once belonged. He it was who recommended me to the stake president as worthy to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. He it was who recommended me to the President of the Church as one worthy to serve as a missionary. He it was who welcomed me home and who subsequently signed my recommend as one worthy to be married in the house of the Lord.

He grew old in the service and died, and it was my honor to speak at his funeral. A great congregation filled the chapel where he had presided for so long. I spoke out of the heart of a boy whom he had befriended and helped, out of the heart of a youth whom he had guided and counseled, out of the experience of an adult whose life he had blessed in many ways.

Invocation of blessings

I bear testimony of the strength and goodness of the bishops of this church. I pay tribute to counselors who help them and to all who serve under their direction in response to the calls they make. I invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you good men that you may be possessed of strength and vitality to carry the burdens of the day, that you may have wisdom given of God in the delicate and sensitive situations with which you must deal, that you may have generous hearts in meeting the needs of the poor, that you may judge, not as men judge, but with that wisdom which comes from above, and that as the years pass there may come into your hearts the sweet satisfaction of knowing that you have served your Father well through service to His children.

Someday you will be released. It will be a time of sadness for you. But there will be comfort as your people thank you. Nor will they ever forget you. They will remember you and speak with appreciation through years to come, for among

all Church officers you are nearest to them. You have been called, ordained, and set apart as shepherds to the flock. You have been endowed with discernment, judgment, and love to bless their lives. In the process you will bless your own.

I bear testimony of the divine nature of your calling and of the magnificent way in which you fulfill it. May you, your counselors, your wives, your children be blessed as you serve the children of the Lord, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

We call your attention to the fact that the nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M.

As you leave this meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude for the beautiful way you brethren from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus have presented the music this evening.

The choir will now sing "Praise the Lord."

The benediction will be offered by Elder Spencer H. Osborn of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Praise the Lord."

Elder Spencer H. Osborn offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 158th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 2, 1988. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and Robert Cundick at the organ.

Before the session, the choir sang "O Ye Mountains High" without announcement.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, in this, the fourth general session of the 158th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this and all sessions of the conference, has asked me to conduct these services.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elder Keith W. Wilcox and Bishop Glenn L. Pace are seated on the stand. We also extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and officers and members of the Church from many lands who have

assembled to worship and to counsel together.

The Tabernacle Choir is providing the music for this session under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Donald Riplinger, with Brother Robert Cundick at the organ.

The choir opened these services by singing "O Ye Mountains High" and will now sing "O Love That Glorifies the Son," following which Elder F. Burton Howard, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "O Love That Glorifies the Son."

Elder F. Burton Howard offered the invocation.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A missionary couple heals and helps

My brothers and sisters, let me tell you of a recent experience. We were in the city of Bacolod on the island of Negros Occidente in the Republic of the Philippines. There, to my great surprise, I met a man I had not seen in years.

The weather was steamy hot, as it always is in Bacolod, the center of the once thriving Filipino sugar industry. My friend was in a short-sleeved white shirt with dark trousers, his shoes shined. His beautiful wife, Marva, was beside him. I said, "Victor Jex, what are you doing here?"

He smiled and replied, "We're doing the Lord's work. We're helping the people. We're missionaries."

"Where do you live?"

"In a little house in Iloilo on the island of Panay. We came over on the ferry for the conference."

I thought of when I had last seen them. It was a few years ago. They then lived in a beautiful home in Scarsdale, New York. He was a widely recognized and honored chemist, with a doctorate in chemical engineering. He worked for one of the big multinational companies headquartered in New York. He was credited with putting together the chemical ingredients of a product now sold around the world, the name of which is known to millions of people and the profit from which has run into many millions of dollars for his company.

He was well paid and highly respected.

He was also the president of the Yorktown stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He had under his direction a corps of church workers who served faithfully in their local wards, many of whom commuted each day to

and from New York City where they held high and responsible positions in some of the great corporations of America. He was their church leader.

Now he was retired. He and his wife had sold their beautiful home, had given their children what furniture they wanted, and donated the rest to others. They had disposed of their cars and everything except their clothing, their family photographs, and their family history records. They had made themselves available to the Lord and His church to go wherever they might be sent at their own expense. They were now in the Philippines Bacolod Mission, working among the wonderful, friendly, brown-skinned people of the area. Unemployment is high in this region, and there is much of misery. But wherever Elder and Sister Jex go, they touch for good the lives of those among whom they serve.

They are there to heal the suffering people, to teach the gospel of Christ, to give encouragement and strength and hope and faith. They are there to heal wounds of misunderstanding and contention. They are there to bless the sick and to help those with diseased bodies and frustrated minds. Their smile is infectious, their laugh a joy to hear. They are living humbly among the poor, down at the level of the people, but standing straight and tall to lift with strong hands.

This former New York executive and his charming companion are in the service of the Savior, giving their full time, their resources, and their love to bless with healing the lives of many who are discouraged and need help. Here is a retired New Yorker, a man of great learning and recognized capacity, living in a home with few conveniences, a simple little place that would fit in the living room of his former house.

He and his wife are there, with others of their kind. They are two of a band of remarkable and dedicated older missionary couples who minister to the wants of people with numerous problems. They receive no financial compensation. They pay their own way. This world's goods mean little to them. As I said, they sold

all they had when they left to come to the Philippines. They will stay for as long as they are assigned by the Church to do so. Then they want to go on another mission. They are healers among the people, serving in the cause of the Master Healer.

The healing power of Christ

I have since reflected much on the power of Christ to heal and bless. It was He who said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). In a world of sickness and sorrow, of tension and jealousy and greed, there must be much of healing if there is to be life abundant.

The prophet Malachi declared, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2).

Malachi's prophecy was fulfilled. Jesus came to earth, the Son of God, with power over life and death. He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, caused the lame to walk, and the dead to rise. He was the man of miracles who "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

"So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee. . . . And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

"When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. . . .

"Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

"And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth" (John 4:46-47, 50-51).

This, the second miracle wrought by the Master, was followed by other miracles of healing.

Christ healed by the power of God which was within Him. That power He gave to His chosen disciples, saying, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

Healing power has been restored

That same power has been restored in this generation. It came through the laying on of hands by Peter, James, and John, who received it from the Lord Himself. It was bestowed upon Joseph Smith, the prophet of this dispensation. Its presence is among us. Many of you are acquainted with the history of the Church and are familiar with the account related by Wilford Woodruff concerning the events of July 22, 1839. It is worthy of repetition. Nauvoo at that time was an unhealthy and swampy place. There was much of sickness. Joseph was among those who were afflicted. But being filled with the Spirit, he rose from his bed and went out among the sick, healing them and raising them. He then crossed the river to the settlement in Montrose, Iowa. I read now from the account of Elder Woodruff:

"The first house he visited was that occupied by Elder Brigham Young, the president of the quorum of the twelve, who lay sick. Joseph healed him, then he arose and accompanied the Prophet on his visit to others who were in the same condition. They visited Elder W. Woodruff, also Elders Orson Pratt and John Taylor, all of whom were living in Montrose. They also accompanied him. The next place they visited was the home of Elijah Fordham, who was supposed to be about breathing his last. When the company entered the room the Prophet of God walked up to the dying man, and took hold of his right hand and spoke to him; but Brother Fordham was unable to speak, his eyes were set in his head like glass, and he seemed entirely unconscious of all around him. Joseph held his hand and looked into his eyes in silence for a length of time. A change in the countenance of Brother Fordham was soon perceptible to all present. His sight returned, and upon Joseph asking him if he knew him, he, in a low whisper, answered, 'Yes.' Joseph asked him if he had faith to be healed. He answered, 'I fear it is too late; if you had come sooner I think I would have been healed.' The Prophet said, 'Do you believe in Jesus Christ?' He answered in a feeble voice, 'I do.' Joseph then stood

erect, still holding his hand in silence several moments; then he spoke in a very loud voice, saying: 'Brother Fordham, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to arise from this bed and be made whole.' His voice was like the voice of God, and not of man. It seemed as though the house shook to its very foundations. Brother Fordham arose from his bed and was immediately made whole. His feet were bound in poultices, which he kicked off, then putting on his clothes, he ate a bowl of bread and milk, and followed the Prophet into the street" (in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, rev. ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979], pp. 223-24).

Declared James of old: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:14-15).

That power to heal the sick is still among us. It is the power of the priesthood of God. It is the authority held by the elders of this Church.

A transcendent power

We welcome and praise and utilize the marvelous procedures of modern medicine which have done so much to alleviate human suffering and lengthen human life. All of us are indebted to the dedicated men and women of science and medicine who have conquered so much of disease, who have mitigated pain, who have stayed the hand of death. I cannot say enough of gratitude for them.

Yet they are the first to admit the limitations of their knowledge and the imperfection of their skills in dealing with many matters of life and death. The mighty Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that in them are has given to His servants a divine power that sometimes transcends all the powers and knowledge of men. I venture to say that there is scarcely a faithful elder within the sound of my voice who could not recount

instances in which this healing power has been made manifest in behalf of the sick. It is the healing power of Christ.

The sickness of sin

And there is much of sickness among us other than that of the body.

There is the sickness of sin. One of our national magazines carried an extensive review of a sacrilegious film being shown in theaters across the world. Letters poured in to the editor. I quote from one of these. Said the writer, "I am a former alcoholic and adulterer set free by the power of the living Jesus Christ" (*Time*, 5 Sept. 1988, p. 7).

Legion are those who have testified of the healing power of Christ to lift them from the desolation of sin to higher and nobler living.

Sickness caused by selfishness

There is much of another category of sickness among us. I speak of conflicts, quarrels, arguments which are a debilitating disease particularly afflicting families. If there be such problems in the homes of any within the sound of my voice, I encourage you to invite the healing power of Christ. To those to whom He spoke on the Mount, Jesus said:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . .

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain" (Matthew 5:38-39, 41).

The application of this principle, difficult to live but wondrous in its curative powers, would have a miraculous effect on our troubled homes. It is selfishness which is the cause of most of our misery. It is as a canker disease. The healing power of Christ, found in the doctrine of going the second mile, would do wonders to still argument and accusation, fault-finding and evil speaking.

Our duty and capacity to heal

The same healing spirit would do wonders for the sickness of our society. The Lord has declared that it is our duty, as those blessed with the healing power of the Master, to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

Great is the healing capacity of those who follow the admonition given by James: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

Invoke healing powers in worldly conflicts

We live in an environment where there is much of litigation and conflict, of suing and countersuing. Even here the powers of healing may be invoked. As a young man I worked with Elder Stephen L. Richards, then of the Council of the Twelve. When he came into the First Presidency of the Church, he asked me to assist him with a very delicate and sensitive matter. It was fraught with most grave and serious consequences. After listening to him discuss it, I said, "President Richards, you don't want me; you want a lawyer." He said, "I am a lawyer. I don't want to litigate this. I want to compose it."

We directed our efforts to that end, and wonderful results followed. Money was saved, much of it. Embarrassment was avoided. The work was moved forward without fanfare or headlines. Wounds were closed. The healing powers of the Master, the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, were invoked in a delicate and difficult situation to compose what otherwise could have become a catastrophe.

Exercise healing power inwardly

It is not always easy to live by these doctrines when our very natures impel us to fight back. For instance, there are those who have made it the mission of their

lives to try to destroy this, the work of God. It has been so from the beginning of the Church, and now, in recent times, we are seeing more of it with evil accusations, falsehoods, and innuendo designed to embarrass this work and its officers. A natural inclination is to fight back, to challenge these falsehoods and bring action against their perpetrators. But when these inclinations make themselves felt, there arise also the words of the Master healer, who said:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-44).

Most of us have not reached that stage of compassion and love and forgiveness. It is not easy. It requires a self-discipline almost greater than we are capable of. But as we try, we come to know that there is a resource of healing, that there is a mighty power of healing in Christ, and that if we are to be His true servants we must not only exercise that healing power in behalf of others, but, perhaps more important, inwardly.

Ours is a ministry of healing

I would that the healing power of Christ might spread over the earth and be diffused through our society and into our homes, that it might cure men's hearts of the evil and adverse elements of greed and hate and conflict. I believe it could happen. I believe it must happen. If the lamb is to lie down with the lion, then

peace must overcome conflict, healing must mend injury.

Jesus of Nazareth healed the sick among whom He moved. His regenerating power is with us today to be invoked through His holy priesthood. His divine teachings, His incomparable example, His matchless life, His all-encompassing sacrifice will bring healing to broken hearts, reconciliation to those who argue and shout, even peace to warring nations if sought with humility and forgiveness and love.

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, ours is a ministry of healing, with a duty to bind the wounds and ease the pain of those who suffer. Upon a world afflicted with greed and contention, upon families distressed by argument and selfishness, upon individuals burdened with sin and troubles and sorrows, I invoke the healing power of Christ, giving my witness of its efficacy and wonder. I testify of Him who is the great source of healing. He is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, "The Sun of Righteousness," who came "with healing in his wings." Of this I humbly testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "The Lord's Prayer," following which President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will speak to us.

The choir sang "The Lord's Prayer."

President Howard W. Hunter

The promise of divine guidance

All of us face times in our lives when we need heavenly help in a special and urgent way. We all have moments when we are overwhelmed by circumstances or

confused by the counsel we get from others, and we feel a great need to receive spiritual guidance, a great need to find the right path and do the right thing. In the scriptural preface to this latter-day dispensation, the Lord promised that if we

would be humble in such times of need and turn to him for aid, we would "be made strong, and [be] blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time" (D&C 1:28). That help is ours if we will but seek it, trust in it, and follow what King Benjamin, in the Book of Mormon, called "the enticings of the Holy Spirit" (Mosiah 3:19).

Perhaps no promise in life is more reassuring than that promise of divine assistance and spiritual guidance in times of need. It is a gift freely given from heaven, a gift that we need from our earliest youth through the very latest days of our lives.

Allow me to use three examples this morning of such spiritual experiences, examples that recall the anxious moments of the very young as well as the possibility of continued spiritual growth for those who are not so young.

Joseph Smith's spiritual sensitivity

My first example is the well-known and dearly loved account of the boy-prophet Joseph Smith as he sought to know the mind and will of the Lord at a time of confusion and concern in his life. As every Latter-day Saint knows, the area near Palmyra, New York, had become a place of "unusual excitement on the subject of religion" during young Joseph's boyhood years there. Indeed, the entire district appeared to him to be affected by it, with "great multitudes," he wrote, uniting themselves to the different religious parties and causing "no small stir and division" among the people (Joseph Smith—History 1:5).

For a boy who had barely turned fourteen, his search for the truth was made even more difficult and confusing because members of the Smith family differed in their religious preferences at the time.

Now, with that familiar background and setting, I invite you to consider these rather remarkable thoughts and feelings from a boy of such a tender age. He wrote:

"During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness; but

though my feelings were deep and often poignant, still I kept myself aloof from all these [factions] . . . ; so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.

"My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult were so great and incessant. . . .

"In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?

"While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

"Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know" (Joseph Smith—History 1:8–12).

Of course, what happened next changed the course of human history. Determining to "ask of God," young Joseph retired to a grove near his rural home. There, in answer to his fervent prayer, God, the Eternal Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ, visited Joseph and counseled him. That great manifestation, of which I humbly testify, answered many more questions for our dispensation than simply which church young Joseph should or should not join.

But my purpose this morning is not to outline the first moments of the Restoration, though it is one of the most sacred stories in the scriptures. I wish, rather,

simply to emphasize the impressive degree of spiritual sensitivity demonstrated by this very young and untutored boy.

How many of us, at fourteen or any age, could keep our heads steady and our wits calm with so many forces tugging and pulling on us, especially on such an important subject as our eternal salvation? How many of us could withstand the emotional conflict that might come when parents differ in their religious persuasions? How many of us, at fourteen or fifty, would search within our souls and search within holy writ to find answers to what the Apostle Paul called "the deep things of God"? (I Corinthians 2:10).

How remarkable—at least it may seem remarkable to us in our day—that this lad would turn profoundly to the scriptures and then to private prayer, perhaps the two greatest sources of spiritual insight and spiritual impression that are available universally to mankind. Certainly he was torn by differing opinions, but he was determined to do the right thing and determined to find the right way. He believed, as you and I must believe, that he could be taught and blessed from on high, as he was.

But, we may say, Joseph Smith was a very special spirit, and his was a special case. What about the rest of us who may now be older—at least older than fourteen—and have not been destined to open a dispensation of the gospel? We also must make decisions and sort out confusion and cut through a war of words in a whole host of subjects that affect our lives. The world is full of such difficult decisions, and sometimes as we face them, we may feel our age or our infirmities.

Sometimes we may feel that our spiritual edge has grown dull. On some very trying days, we may even feel that God has forgotten us, has left us alone in our confusion and concern. But that feeling is no more justified for the older ones among us than it is for the younger and less experienced. God knows and loves us all. We are, every one of us, his daughters and his sons, and whatever life's lessons may have brought us, the promise is still true: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men

liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

Pray and study to know God's purpose

For my second example, may I refer to one not nearly as young as Joseph Smith. Listen to these lines written by Elizabeth Lloyd Howell when she considered how the majestic poet John Milton must have felt when he went blind late in life.

I am old and blind!

Men point at me as smitten by God's frown:

Afflicted and deserted of my kind,
Yet am I not cast down.

I am weak, yet strong;

I murmur not that I no longer see;
Poor, old, and helpless, I the more
belong,

Father supreme, to thee! . . .

Thy glorious face

Is leaning toward me; and its holy
light

Shines in upon my lonely dwelling
place,—

And there is no more night.

On my bended knee

I recognize thy purpose clearly
shown:

My vision thou hast dimmed,
that I may see

Thyself, thyself alone.

("Milton's Prayer for Patience,"
in *The World's Great Religious Poetry*, ed. Caroline Miles Hill
[New York: MacMillan Co.,
1954], p. 19)

"My vision thou hast dimmed, that I may see / Thyself, thyself alone." That is a wonderfully comforting thought to young and old alike who must look inward and upward when the external world around us is so confusing and unstable and grim. Joseph Smith's view of what to do was certainly a dim one until he found the illumination of the scriptures and the searchlight of prayer.

Obviously, it was important to God's purposes that young Joseph was *not* able to see too clearly amidst the confusion caused by men, lest that half-light keep him from seeking and beholding the source of all light and all truth. Like Mrs. Howell's reference to Milton, the blind poet, "on bended knee" we can all recognize God's "purpose clearly shown" if we will rely on spiritual resources, letting our age and experience—yes, and even our infirmities—turn us yet closer to God.

There may be so very much our Father in Heaven would like to give us—young, old, or middle-aged—if we would but seek his presence regularly through such avenues as scripture study and earnest prayer. Of course, developing spirituality and attuning ourselves to the highest influences of godliness is not an easy matter. It takes time and frequently involves a struggle.

Elisha's reliance on heavenly help

Let me close with a third example noting just such a struggle shared by a youth and an older man.

Elisha, a prophet, seer, and revelator, had counseled the king of Israel on how and where and when to defend against the warring Syrians. The king of Syria, of course, wished to rid his army of Elisha's prophetic interference. The record reads:

"Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. . . .

"[They] compassed the city both with horses and chariots" (2 Kings 6:14–15).

The odds were staggering. It was an old man and a boy against what looked like the whole world. Elisha's young companion was fearful and cried, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" And Elisha's reply? "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:15–16). But there were

no others with the old man and his young companion. From what source could their help possibly come?

Then Elisha turned his eyes heavenward, saying, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see." And, we read, "the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17).

"I will lead you along"

In the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have help from on high. "Be of good cheer," the Lord says, "for I will lead you along" (D&C 78:18). "I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy" (D&C 11:13).

I testify of the divinity of Jesus Christ. God does live and imparts to us his Spirit. In facing life's problems and meeting life's tasks, may we all claim that gift from God, our Father, and find spiritual joy, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Let All Men Praise the Lord" without announcement.

President Monson

We have just heard from President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the choir singing "Let All Men Praise the Lord."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Hope of Israel," following which we shall hear from Elder Marion D. Hanks, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Hope of Israel."

Elder Marion D. Hanks

Our closest neighbors

In a stake conference only a few days ago, I heard the tender story of an older man who had taken his 1974-model automobile to a garage for repairs. The projected work was more costly than he or the conscientious mechanic had contemplated, and the garage owner wondered if the elderly man really wanted to spend that much on such an old car.

Said the car owner, "Could you take a credit card that isn't mine?"

"Whose is it?" asked the garage man.

"It is my daughter's," the man said. "She wants me to have my automobile in good, safe condition. It is the only thing I have."

As the son of a father of whom I have no conscious memory, and as a father of loving children, I weep over that. There is no neighbor, after all, closer than the ones in our own families. And in this incident, knowing no more details, one does not get the impression of a casual check written on ample funds, but of a loving daughter very likely sacrificing to preserve the self-esteem and precarious independence of a cherished father.

In the same weekend, I listened to the account of a stake president who accompanied his bishop to a hospital to visit a man who was very ill. As they held his hand, the patient sorted through the cobwebs of pain and confusion and discerned the presence of his friends, his busy leaders. He spoke: "You came," he said. "You came."

"Love thy neighbour as thyself"

This morning I would like to speak of my deep conviction concerning one of the most sacred and significant principles in our Heavenly Father's plan for his children, and to express appreciation and admiration for so many who so willingly and unselfishly manifest this principle in the way they live.

I speak of that second commandment, linked inseparably by the Lord

Jesus Christ with the "first and great commandment," being indeed "like unto it. . . . On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," he said (Matthew 22:38-40).

The Apostle James called the second commandment the "royal law" (James 2:8). Paul wrote to the Corinthians that "all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:14).

The Good Samaritan

Christ's ministry and his teachings leave no room to doubt with what seriousness we must accept and apply this sacred instruction. As he taught the law of love, Jesus was asked, "And who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). In answer he told the story of a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell among thieves and was robbed and wounded and left at the wayside half dead. A priest and a Levite came by, and "looked on him, and passed by on the other side" (Luke 10:32; see also v. 31).

Into this scene came a Samaritan, a man to whose people and cities the Twelve had been forbidden to go (see Matthew 10:5-6), and he stopped and gave immediate and continuing aid to the troubled man. Jesus said:

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?"

"And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:36-37).

Can there be any question as to the meaning of that story?

Express love through service

It would be difficult to find anyone offering resistance in principle to the virtue of giving service to others, yet there may be some who do not understand the place of vital importance in the fundamentals of our faith that Jesus gave it. For him, in his life and teachings, it was not an option. Indeed, he declared that with-

out it one could not qualify for the greatest of eternal blessings—eternal life (see Matthew 25:31-46). The scriptures consistently so teach—acts of Christian service are expressions of Christian love. My observation and experience confirm the truth of it for me.

Religion is not a thing apart from life. It is not principles and ordinances or missionary work or leadership as an end in themselves. It is manifested by the kind of people we are, by our relationship with our Heavenly Father and his Son and all of the commandments, by the measure in which we qualify for the approval of our own Spirit-guided conscience, and by the way we treat other people.

It is a continuing marvel to me how well and with what grace and unselfish goodness so many live this sacred commandment. And it is sad to think that some may, in a joyless version of "the gospel," miss the special blessings awaiting on the path established by our Savior and leading to the *highest* joy through Christian service and sacrifice. An ancient rabbinical aphorism comes to mind: "God will hold us responsible for all the wonderful things on earth that we refused to enjoy."

An honor to be God's instruments

Adversity is all about us and among us. It is an inevitable element of mortality, and all of us have some share in it ultimately. But our religion, centering in the life and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, helps us comprehend that. God and Christ love us with a mature, perfect love. The plan by which they lead requires mortal instruments of their love. We have the great honor to be invited to be such instruments. We need them, but they also need us. In this service we find the roots of most of those blessings that God wants us to enjoy.

Be fair and kind

Once I was invited by a civic organization to present an award of recognition to the person who had done the most to help handicapped people in the area.

When the honored lady, who was herself severely handicapped, came to the podium to receive her award, she walked between two stalwart men assisting her, with another wheeling an oxygen tank on a carrier behind her, helping her to breathe.

She protested her unworthiness but accepted the award on behalf of all others who had been helpful to the handicapped. She told how her saintly father had prepared her for her first day at school and then left his office to come home to meet her when she returned. He had prepared her to expect some disagreeable comments from a few who could not handle her physical appearance—the humped back and other problems. These birth difficulties, he had assured her, were no one's fault—they were the consequence of problems not yet solved in this imperfect and sometimes unfair world. "But," said he, "if you will always be more fair and more kind to others than a few of them may sometimes be to you, you will enjoy every sweet blessing life affords."

That was her one qualification, she said: she had tried to be more fair and more kind to others than a few of them had sometimes been to her.

Unheralded service

The sweetness of true Christian service is often experienced in obscurity—in quiet rooms in homes and hospitals and places of confinement, in military barracks and refugee camps, and in other places far from public attention. Usually it is unheralded, but it reflects the standard set by the Savior for those who will "inherit the kingdom prepared . . . from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). These are they who serve the hungry and the thirsty and the naked and the homeless and those who are sick or imprisoned, and who do this after the pattern and in the spirit of him who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). To those who so serve he promised eternal life (see Matthew 25:46), while to those who fail to minister to the needy he said, "Inas-

much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me" (Matthew 25:45).

Remember the poor and the needy

An inspiring Book of Mormon teaching deals with the mission of Christ, with his "great and last sacrifice," "infinite and eternal," in bringing about the Atonement, and with justice and mercy and prayer. After a powerful sermon on prayer and the spirit of it, the prophet Amulek declared:

"And now behold, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, do not suppose that this is all; for after ye have done all these things, if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith" (Alma 34:28).

At a time of intense concern to the developing Church, a revelation was received issuing missionary calls, emphasizing the vital importance of ordinances, assigning local leadership of the churches, and then declaring these words: "And remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is *not my disciple*" (D&C 52:40, italics added; see also Moses 7:33).

The diversity of needs

Through Ezekiel of old the Lord gave us a broader view of the diversity of needs which we are under obligation to serve: "The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost" (Ezekiel 34:4).

The book of Alma describes a group of people who were forced to leave their homes and country for a new land, where their fellow Christians "did receive all the poor . . . that came over unto them; and

they did nourish them, and did clothe them, and did give unto them lands for their inheritance; and they did administer unto them according to their wants" (Alma 35:9).

That spirit is still operative among the people of the Church. For several years in the refugee camps in Asia, young representatives of the Church have served special mission assignments preparing those choice people to live in this country. An observer who felt the special spirit with which they so selflessly worked wrote: "You people don't *have* to talk about your religion. Your values come through like a ton of bricks."

The people whom they served have looked upon them with almost the reverence that they might have bestowed upon the Savior himself. And when they have experienced this purifying blessing—the blessing of service—the missionaries have returned to their regular labors or to their homes with these solemn testimonies: "This was the most decent thing I have ever done. My life will never be the same again."

The royal law of love

Across the world, such individual investment of self in service is happening, following the example and teachings of the Lord, who laid upon the altar his very life for the blessing of others.

In this city at this moment, a noble, unselfish young lady who has experienced her own travails serves nearly around the clock at the bedside and in the anxious home of her sorely ill sister, having interrupted her own cherished and long-struggled-for graduate studies to help.

A promising young man has not returned to a prestigious university in the East because he has discovered during his summer break at home that a friend, with whom he had foolishly tampered briefly with an addictive substance which he himself then quit and never touched again, has gone on with the habit and is now addicted. The scholar stays home to help, saying that this is the most important thing he has to do.

The royal law of love is of sacred significance in the Lord's program for his people—an element as vital as any other in the gospel. It is inseparable from them and the spirit of them. It is well known to us institutionally; indeed, the Church to which we have the honor to belong is celebrated for knowing and acting upon it on occasions of great need across the earth.

My purpose this morning has been, in these few words, to honor that commandment and those who do so well personally to accept his invitation to impart

to others "both temporally and spiritually according to their needs" (Mosiah 18:29).

That we may do so, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Marion D. Hanks, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has spoken to us.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

A penetrating question

"What think ye of Christ?" (Matthew 22:42). That question is as penetrating today as when Jesus used it to confound the Pharisees almost two thousand years ago. Like a sword, sharp and powerful, it uncovers what is hidden, divides truth from error, and goes to the heart of religious belief.

Here are some answers being given today.

Some praise Jesus Christ as the greatest teacher who ever lived, but deny that he is Messiah, Savior, or Redeemer. Some prominent theologians teach that our secularized world needs "a new concept of God, stripped of the . . . supernatural." They believe that "not even a suffering God can help to solve the pain and tragedy of modern man" (John A. Hardon, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1971], pp. 356, 359.)

A bishop in one Christian denomination has declared that "Jesus was in every sense a human being, just as we are" ("One Clergyman's Views on the 'Death of God,'" *U.S. News and World Report*, 18 Apr. 1966, p. 57).

Under the influence of such teachings, the religion of many is like the creed of the humanists, who declare that "no deity will save us; we must save ourselves" (*The Encyclopedia of American*

Religions: Religious Creeds, 1st ed., ed. J. Gordon Melton [Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1973], p. 641).

Another church that claims roots in "Christianity" maintains that Jesus' crucifixion was not the fulfillment of his mission, but evidence of its failure. They teach that he did not cleanse men of original sin, but that another messiah must come to complete our salvation and establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. (See *Outline of the Principle, Level 4* [New York: Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity], pp. 159-71, 199-214.)

We are Christians

Many years ago a young Latter-day Saint enrolled in a midwestern university and applied for a scholarship only available to Christians. Both the applicant and the university officials were unsure whether a Mormon was eligible. After consulting a panel of theologians, they concluded that this Mormon was a Christian.

When I first heard of that event over thirty years ago, I was shocked that anyone, especially a member of our church, would entertain any doubt that we are Christians. I have come to a better understanding of that confusion. I think we sometimes thoughtlessly give others cause to wonder. How does this happen?

Simple gospel truths are important

For many years I was a teacher of law. A frequent teaching method in that discipline is to concentrate classroom instruction on the difficult questions—the obscure and debatable matters that lie at the fringes of learning. Some law teachers believe that the simple general rules that answer most legal questions are so obvious that students can learn them by independent study. As a result, these teachers devote little time to teaching the basics.

I believe some of us sometimes do the same thing in gospel teaching. We neglect to teach and testify to some simple, basic truths of paramount importance. This omission permits some members and nonmembers to get wrong ideas about our faith and belief.

Jesus is our Creator and Savior

What do members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints think of Christ?

Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God the Eternal Father. He is our Creator. He is our Teacher. He is our Savior. His atonement paid for the sin of Adam and won victory over death, assuring resurrection and immortality for all men.

He is all of these, but he is more. Jesus Christ is the Savior, whose atoning sacrifice opens the door for us to be cleansed of our personal sins so that we can be readmitted to the presence of God. He is our Redeemer.

Biblical testimonies of the Atonement

The Messiah's atoning sacrifice is the central message of the prophets of all ages. It was prefigured by the animal sacrifices prescribed by the law of Moses, whose whole meaning, one prophet explained, "point[ed] to that great and last sacrifice [of] the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal" (Alma 34:14). The Atonement was promised and predicted by the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah declared:

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: . . . and with his stripes we are healed.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

"He was . . . brought as a lamb to the slaughter. . . .

". . . He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. . . .

". . . He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:5–8, 12).

At the beginning of the Savior's ministry, John the Baptist exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

At the end of his ministry, as Jesus blessed the cup and gave it to his disciples, he said, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). As Latter-day Saints partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we drink water in remembrance of his blood, which was shed for us (see D&C 20:79).

The writers of the New Testament teach that our Savior's suffering and his blood atoned for our sins.

The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians that the first principle of the gospel he preached to them was "how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). And to the Colossians he wrote, "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14; see also Hebrews 2:17, 10:10).

Peter described how Christ "bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

John wrote that "the blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7; see also 2:2, 3:5, 4:10).

We revere the Bible. And so we and our fellow believers in Christ sing these words from that inspiring hymn "How Great Thou Art":

And when I think that God, his Son
not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it
in,
That on the cross my burden gladly
bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin.
(*Hymns* [1985], no. 86)

Need for the Book of Mormon

Although the Bible's explanation of atonement for individual sins should be unmistakable, that doctrine has been misunderstood by many who have only the Bible to explain it.

Modern prophets declare that the Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel in greater clarity than any other scripture (see D&C 20:8-9; 27:5). In a day when many are challenging the divinity of Jesus Christ or doubting the reality of his atonement and resurrection, the message of that second witness, the Book of Mormon, is needed more urgently than ever.

President Ezra Taft Benson has reminded us again and again that the Book of Mormon "was written for our day" and that it "is the keystone in our witness of Jesus Christ" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, pp. 4, 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, pp. 5, 6). I believe that the reason our Heavenly Father has had his prophet direct us into a more intensive study of the Book of Mormon is that this generation needs its message more than any of its forebears. As President Benson has said, the Book of Mormon "provides the most complete explanation of the doctrine of the Atonement," and "its testimony of the Master is clear, undiluted, and full of power" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, p. 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 5).

Heresies about Jesus Christ

In contrast, what is called "liberal theology" teaches that Jesus Christ is important not because he atoned for our sins, but only because he taught us the way to come to God by perfecting ourselves. In this theology, human beings can be reconciled to God entirely through

their own righteousness. (See O. Kendall White, Jr., *Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987], pp. 43-44.)

Another group—secular rather than religious—believes that Jesus was not God, that man is God, and that you can create your own destiny through the powers of your own mind. (See "Age-old Fear of New Age Concern," *Insight*, 11 July 1988, p. 55.)

Man cannot earn salvation

Are Latter-day Saints susceptible to such heresies? The Apostle Paul wrote that we should "work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Could that familiar expression mean that the sum total of our own righteousness will win us salvation and exaltation? Could some of us believe that our heavenly parentage and our divine destiny allow us to pass through mortality and attain eternal life solely on our own merits?

On the basis of what I have heard, I believe that some of us, some of the time, say things that can create that impression. We can forget that keeping the commandments, which is necessary, is not sufficient. As Nephi said, we must labor diligently to persuade everyone "to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23).

In his famous poem "Invictus," William Ernest Henley hurled man's challenge against Fate. With head "bloody, but unbowed," determined man is unconquerable. The last verse reads:

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the
scroll,

I am the master of my fate.

I am the captain of my soul.

(In *Out of the Best Books*, 5 vols., ed. Bruce B. Clark and Robert K. Thomas [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1968], 4:93)

Writing a half-century later, Elder Orson F. Whitney replied with these lines:

Art thou in truth? Then what of him
Who bought thee with his blood?
Who plunged into devouring seas
And snatched thee from the flood?

Who bore for all our fallen race
What none but him could bear.—
The God who died that man might
live,
And endless glory share?

Of what avail thy vaunted strength,
Apart from his vast might?
Pray that his Light may pierce the
gloom,
That thou mayest see aright.

Men are as bubbles on the wave,
As leaves upon the tree.
Thou, captain of thy soul, forsooth!
Who gave that place to thee?

Free will is thine—free agency,
To wield for right or wrong;
But thou must answer unto him
To whom all souls belong.

Bend to the dust that head
“unbowed,”
Small part of Life’s great whole!
And see in him, and him alone,
The Captain of thy soul.

(*Improvement Era*, May 1926,
p. 611)

Man unquestionably has impressive powers and can bring to pass great things by tireless efforts and indomitable will. But after all our obedience and good works, we cannot be saved from the effect of our sins without the grace extended by the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Book of Mormon clarifies doctrines

The Book of Mormon puts us right. It teaches that “salvation doth not come by the law alone” (Mosiah 13:28); that is, salvation does not come by keeping the commandments alone. “By the law no flesh is justified” (2 Nephi 2:5). Even those who serve God with their whole souls are unprofitable servants (see Mosiah 2:21). Man cannot earn his own salvation.

The Book of Mormon teaches, “Since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself” (Alma 22:14). “There can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world” (Alma 34:12; see also 2 Nephi 9:7, Alma 34:8–16). “Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; . . . he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law” (2 Nephi 2:6–7). And so we “preach of Christ . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

In the Book of Mormon the Savior explains the gospel, including the Atonement and its relationship to repentance, baptism, works of righteousness, and the ultimate judgment:

“My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross, . . . that I might draw all men unto me, . . . that they may be judged according to their works. And . . . whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world” (3 Nephi 27:14–16).

In that same teaching the Savior restates these principles in a way that emphasizes our everlasting reliance on the Atonement worked out by the shedding of his blood:

“And no unclean thing can enter into [the Father’s] kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end” (3 Nephi 27:19).

Joseph Smith stated this same relationship in our third article of faith: “We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”

Atonement is inexplicable but true

Why is Christ the only way? How was it possible for him to take upon him-

self the sins of all mankind? Why was it necessary for his blood to be shed? And how can our soiled and sinful selves be cleansed by his blood?

These are mysteries I do not understand. To me, as to President John Taylor, the miracle of the atonement of Jesus Christ is "incomprehensible and inexplicable" (see *The Mediation and Atonement of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1882], pp. 148-49). But the Holy Ghost has given me a witness of its truthfulness, and I rejoice that I can spend my life in proclaiming it.

Testimony of Jesus Christ

I testify with the ancient and modern prophets that there is no other name and no other way under heaven by which man can be saved except by Jesus Christ (see Acts 4:10, 12; 2 Nephi 25:20; Alma 38:9; D&C 18:23).

I witness with the prophet Lehi that "there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah" (2 Nephi 2:8).

I testify with the prophet Alma that no man can be saved except he is cleansed from all stain, through the blood of Jesus Christ (see Alma 5:21). As he explains, "repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment" (Alma 42:16), and "therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice" (Alma 42:15).

I witness with the prophets of the Book of Mormon that the Messiah, the Holy One of Israel, suffered "according to the flesh" (Alma 7:13), the pains, the infirmities, and the griefs and sorrows of every living creature in the family of Adam (see 2 Nephi 9:21, Alma 7:12-13, Mosiah 14:4, D&C 18:11).

I testify that when the Savior suffered and died for all men, all men became subject unto him (see 2 Nephi 9:5) and to his commandment that all must repent and be baptized in his name, having faith in him, "or they cannot be saved in

the kingdom of God" (2 Nephi 9:23; see also Alma 11:40; John 3:5, 8:24).

We must repent to be saved

Speaking through the Prophet Joseph Smith in our dispensation, the Savior said:

"I am . . . Christ the Lord, . . . the Redeemer of the world.

"I [have] accomplished and finished the will of him whose I am, even the Father, concerning me—having done this that I might subdue all things unto myself—

"Retaining all power, even to . . . judging every man according to his works and the deeds which he hath done.

"And surely every man must repent or suffer, for I, God, am endless. . . .

"Wherefore, I command you to repent. . . .

"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

"But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I" (D&C 19:1-4, 13, 16-17).

Salvation is through Christ's blood

What think we of Christ? As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we testify with the Book of Mormon prophet-king Benjamin that "there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent,

"For behold, . . . salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ" (Mosiah 3:17-18).

And as we repent of our sins and seek to keep his commandments and our covenants, we cry out, as Benjamin's people cried out, "O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins" (Mosiah 4:2).

In all of this, we remember and rely on the Lord's sure word: "Keep my commandments in all things.

"And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:6-7). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah" without announcement.

President Monson

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

President Ezra Taft Benson has suggested that I be the concluding speaker at this session.

President Thomas S. Monson

Happiness—the object of our existence

I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to be with me. "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God" (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 255-56).

This description of such a universal goal was provided by the Prophet Joseph Smith. It was relevant then. It is relevant now. With such a clear road map to follow, why then are there so many unhappy people? Frequently, frowns outnumber smiles and despair dampens joy. We live so far below the level of our divine possibilities. Some become confused by materialism, entangled by sin, and lost among the passing parade of humanity. Others cry out in the words of the convert of Philip of old: "How can I [find my way], except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:31).

Happiness is found at home

Happiness does not consist of a glut of luxury, the world's idea of a "good time." Nor must we search for it in faraway places with strange-sounding names. Happiness is found at home.

All of us remember the home of our childhood. Interestingly, our thoughts do

not dwell on whether the house was large or small, the neighborhood fashionable or downtrodden. Rather, we delight in the experiences we shared as a family. The home is the laboratory of our lives, and what we learn there largely determines what we do when we leave there.

Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, prime minister of Great Britain, expressed the profound philosophy: "The family is the building block of society. It is a nursery, a school, a hospital, a leisure centre, a place of refuge and a place of rest. It encompasses the whole of the society. It fashions our beliefs; it is the preparation for the rest of our life" (Nicholas Wood, "Thatcher Champions the Family," *The Times*, 26 May 1988, p. 24).

"Home is where the heart is." It does take "a heap o' livin'" to make a house a home (Edgar A. Guest, "Home," in *The Family Book of Best-Loved Poems*, ed. David L. George [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1952], p. 151). "Home, home, sweet, sweet home, Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home" (*Hymns* [1948], no. 185). We turn from the reverie of such pleasant recollections. We contemplate parents gone, family grown, childhood vanished. Slowly but surely we face the truth: We are responsible for the home we build. We must build wisely, for eternity is not a short voyage. There will be calm and wind, sunlight and shadows, joy and sorrow. But if we really try, our home can be a bit of heaven here on earth. The thoughts we think, the deeds we do, the lives we live influence not only the success of our

earthly journey; they mark the way to our eternal goals.

Hallmarks of a happy home

Happy homes come in a variety of appearances. Some feature large families with father, mother, brothers, and sisters living together in a spirit of love. Others consist of a single parent with one or two children, while other homes have but one occupant. There are, however, identifying features which are to be found in a happy home, whatever the number or description of its family members. I refer to these as "Hallmarks of a Happy Home." They consist of—

1. A pattern of prayer.
2. A library of learning.
3. A legacy of love.
4. A treasury of testimony.

A pattern of prayer

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, Uttered or unexpressed" (*Hymns* [1985], no. 145). So universal is its application, so beneficial its result, that prayer qualifies as the number-one hallmark of a happy home. As parents listen to the prayer of a child, they too draw close to God. These little ones, who so recently have been with their Heavenly Father, have no inhibitions in expressing to Him their feelings, their wishes, their thanks.

Family prayer is the greatest deterrent to sin, and hence the most beneficent provider of joy and happiness. The old saying is yet true: "The family that prays together stays together."

"It is not possible for a married couple to reach happiness with eyes fixed on different stars; . . . they must set up a single ideal and work toward [it]. . . . Cease cherishing impossible fancies of impossible futures. Take the best of [your] dreams and fit them to life as it comes every day" (Temple Bailey, "The Bride Who Makes Her Dreams Come True," *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1912).

On October 7, my wife, Frances, and I will have been married forty years. Our marriage took place just to the east of us in the holy temple. He who performed

the ceremony, Benjamin Bowring, counseled us: "May I offer you newlyweds a formula which will ensure that any disagreement you may have will last no longer than one day? Every night kneel by the side of your bed. One night, Brother Monson, you offer the prayer, aloud, on bended knee. The next night you, Sister Monson, offer the prayer, aloud, on bended knee. I can then assure you that any misunderstanding that develops during the day will vanish as you pray. You simply can't pray together and retain any but the best of feelings toward one another."

When I was called to the Council of the Twelve just twenty-five years ago this weekend, President McKay asked me concerning my family. I related to him this guiding formula of prayer and bore witness to its validity. He sat back in his large leather chair and, with a smile, responded, "The same formula that has worked for you has blessed the lives of my family during all the years of our marriage."

Prayer is the passport to spiritual power.

A library of learning

A second hallmark of a happy home is discovered when home is a library of learning. An essential part of our learning library will be good books.

Books are keys to wisdom's treasure;
Books are gates to lands of pleasure;
Books are paths that upward lead;
Books are friends. Come, let us read.
(Emilie Pousson)

Reading is one of the true pleasures of life. In our age of mass culture, when so much that we encounter is abridged, adapted, adulterated, shredded, and boiled down, it is mind-easing and mind-inspiring to sit down privately with a congenial book.

James A. Michener, prominent author, suggests: "A nation becomes what its young people read in their youth. Its ideals are fashioned then, its goals strongly determined."

The Lord counseled, "Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118).

The standard works offer the library of learning of which I speak. We must be careful not to underestimate the capacity of children to read and to understand the word of God.

A few months ago we took our grandchildren on an escorted tour of the Church printing facilities. There, all of us saw the missionary edition of the Book of Mormon coming off the delivery line—printed, bound, and trimmed, ready for reading. I said to a young grandson, "The operator says that you can remove one copy of the Book of Mormon to be your very own. You select the copy, and it will then be yours."

Removing one finished copy of the book, he clutched it to his breast and said with sincerity, "I love the Book of Mormon. This is *my* book."

I really don't remember other events of that day, but none of us who was there will ever forget the honest expression from the heart of a child.

As parents, we should remember that our lives may be the book from the family library which the children most treasure. Are our examples worthy of emulation? Do we live in such a way that a son or a daughter may say, "I want to follow my dad," or "I want to be like my mother"? Unlike the book on the library shelf, the covers of which shield the contents, our lives cannot be closed. Parents, we truly are an open book.

A legacy of love

A third hallmark of a happy home is a legacy of love.

As a small boy, I enjoyed visiting the home of my grandmother on Bueno Avenue here in Salt Lake City. Grandmother was always so happy to see us and to draw us close to her. Seated on her lap, we listened as she read to us.

Her youngest son and his wife now occupy that same home. I visited there recently. The fireplug on the curb seemed so small compared to its size when I

climbed its lofty heights those long years ago. The friendly porch was the same, the quiet, peaceful atmosphere not altered. Hanging on the kitchen wall was a framed expression which my aunt had embroidered. It carried a world of practical application: "Choose your love; love your choice." She who prepared that message is now in frail health. Her husband, Ray, cares for her constantly and is the epitome of faithful and enduring love. She reciprocates in her own way. They live the lesson they framed.

Seemingly little lessons of love are observed by children as they silently absorb the examples of their parents. My own father, a printer, worked long and hard practically every day of his life. I'm certain that on the Sabbath he would have enjoyed just being at home. Rather, he visited elderly family members and brought cheer into their lives.

One was his uncle, who was crippled by arthritis so severe that he could not walk or care for himself. On a Sunday afternoon Dad would say to me, "Come along, Tommy; let's take Uncle Elias for a short drive." Boarding the old 1928 Oldsmobile, we would proceed to Eighth West, where, at the home of Uncle Elias, I would wait in the car while Dad went inside. Soon he would emerge from the house, carrying in his arms like a china doll his crippled uncle. I then would open the door and watch how tenderly and with such affection my father would place Uncle Elias in the front seat so he would have a fine view while I occupied the rear seat.

The drive was brief and the conversation limited, but oh, what a legacy of love! Father never read to me from the Bible about the good Samaritan. Rather, he took me with him and Uncle Elias in that old 1928 Oldsmobile along the road to Jericho.

When our homes carry the legacy of love, we will not receive Jacob's chastisement as recorded in the Book of Mormon: "Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sabbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you" (Jacob 2:35).

Let us not be discouraged by the many newspaper and television accounts of discord—and sometimes cruelty—between companions and assume that virtue has vanished and love's lamp no longer glows. Two of my dearest friends now lie in poor health and helpless. They are not alone. Their faithful companions minister to them in tender love. My friend Pres, who rarely leaves the side of his wife, said of her, "Christine is weaker but still beautiful. I love her so." What a noble tribute to fidelity, to love, to marriage!

Another, a wife named Gertrude, makes comfortable her husband, Mark, in his room. Everything is just as he would want the room to be. She reads to him. She chats with him about the family. She once said to me during this long vigil, "I love him more than ever."

For a beautiful example of "love at home," we need not look beyond the family of President and Sister Benson. My wife and I were privileged to attend the Bensons' sixty-second wedding anniversary party just three weeks ago. Children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren rejoiced as the President and his companion held hands and led the group in singing "Keep the Home Fires Burning," "Love's Old Sweet Song," and "I Love You Truly." The entire Church can well emulate the Bensons' example of studying the scriptures, attending the temple, and enjoying life together.

These are pictures which portray a legacy of love as a hallmark of a happy home.

A treasury of testimony

A fourth hallmark of a happy home is a treasury of testimony. "The first and foremost opportunity for teaching in the Church lies in the home," observed President David O. McKay. "A true Mormon home is one in which if Christ should chance to enter, he would be pleased to linger and to rest" (*Gospel Ideals* [Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953], p. 169).

What are we doing to ensure that our homes meet this description? It isn't

enough for parents alone to have strong testimonies. Children can ride only so long on the coattails of a parent's conviction.

President Heber J. Grant declared: "It is our duty to teach our children in their youth. I may know that the gospel is true, and so may my wife; but I want to tell you that our children will not know that the gospel is true unless they study it and gain a testimony for themselves."

A love for the Savior, a reverence for His name, and genuine respect one for another will provide a fertile seedbed for a testimony to grow.

Learning the gospel, bearing a testimony, leading a family are rarely if ever simple processes. Life's journey is characterized by bumps in the road, swells in the sea—even the turbulence of our times.

Some years ago, while visiting the members and missionaries in Australia, I witnessed a sublime example depicting how a treasury of testimony can bless and sanctify a home. The mission president, Horace D. Ensign, and I were traveling the long distance from Sydney to Darwin, where I was to break ground for our first chapel in that city. En route we had a scheduled stop at a mining community named Mt. Isa. As we entered the small airport at Mt. Isa, a woman and her two children approached. She said, "I am Judith Louden, a member of the Church, and these are my two children. We thought you might be on this flight, so we have come to visit with you during your brief stopover." She explained that her husband was not a member of the Church and that she and the children were indeed the only members in the entire area. We shared lessons and bore testimony.

Time passed. As we prepared to re-board, Sister Louden looked so forlorn, so alone. She pleaded, "You can't go yet; I have so missed the Church." Suddenly the loudspeaker announced a thirty-minute mechanical delay of our flight. Sister Louden whispered, "My prayer has just been answered." She then asked how she might influence her husband to show an interest in the gospel. We counseled her to include him in their home Primary lesson each week and be to him a living

testimony of the gospel. I mentioned we would send to her a subscription to *The Children's Friend* and additional helps for her family teaching. We urged that she never give up on her husband.

We departed Mt. Isa, a city to which I have never returned. I shall, however, always hold dear in memory that sweet mother and those precious children extending a tear-filled expression and a fond wave of gratitude and good-bye.

Several years later, while speaking at a priesthood leadership meeting in Brisbane, Australia, I emphasized the significance of gospel scholarship in the home and the importance of living the gospel and being examples of the truth. I shared with the men assembled the account of Sister Louden and the impact her faith and determination had made on me. As I concluded, I said, "I suppose I'll never know if Sister Louden's husband ever joined the Church, but he couldn't have found a better model to follow."

One of the leaders raised his hand, then stood and declared, "Brother Monson, I am Richard Louden. The woman of whom you speak is my wife. The children [his voice quavered] are our children. We are a forever family now, thanks in part to the persistence and the patience of my dear wife. She did it all." Not a word was spoken. The silence was broken only by sniffles and muffled sobs and marked by the sight of tears streaming from every eye.

Open our hearts and souls

My brothers and sisters, let us determine, whatever our circumstance, to make of our houses happy homes. Let us open wide the windows of our hearts, that each family member may feel welcome and "at home." Let us open also the doors of our very souls, that the dear Christ may enter. Remember His promise: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

How welcome He will feel, how joyful will be our lives, when the "Hallmarks of a Happy Home" greet Him, even—

A pattern of prayer;
A library of learning;
A legacy of love;
A treasury of testimony.

That our loving Heavenly Father may bless all of us in our quest for such happy homes is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Tabernacle Choir will sing in closing "How Great the Wisdom and the Love." The benediction will be offered by Elder Victor L. Brown, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The choir sang "How Great the Wisdom and the Love."

Elder Victor L. Brown offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 158th Semi-annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 2, 1988. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Donald

Ripplinger conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

President Hinckley made the following remarks as the meeting opened:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

President Ezra Taft Benson, who has presided at all sessions of this conference,

has asked that I conduct this fifth and concluding session of the 158th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend a sincere welcome to all assembled in the Tabernacle and to those seated in the Assembly Hall, where Elders Dean L. Larsen and George P. Lee are seated on the stand. We send also our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or by means of satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Rippinger directing and John Longhurst at the organ, will begin this service by singing "Lead On, O King Eternal." The invocation will be

offered by Elder Russell C. Taylor of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Lead On, O King Eternal."

Elder Russell C. Taylor offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "God So Loved the World." Following the singing, Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "God So Loved the World."

Elder L. Tom Perry

Elder Scott, I would just like to add my welcome to the others that have been given to you as you assume this great position. You are joining a most unique quorum. It is made up of very common men with a most uncommon calling. There is a spirit, a unity, and a devotion in this body like none other you will ever experience. We are excited to have you and your great talent and abilities with us in our quorum. Welcome! Welcome! Welcome!

Train up a child

I have selected as the theme for my conference message a line from Proverbs: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (22:6).

The Lord has been very specific in His instructions to parents in this day. From the Doctrine and Covenants we read:

"And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach

them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. . . .

"And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.

"And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy. . . .

"Now, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them; and their children are also growing up in wickedness; they also seek not earnestly the riches of eternity, but their eyes are full of greediness.

"These things ought not to be, and must be done away from among them" (D&C 68:25, 28-29, 31-32).

The language is direct, and it leaves no room for misunderstanding. The responsibility for training children rests primarily with the parents.

Parents' responsibility

Many years ago I had the great pleasure of having the assignment as second counselor in the Sunday School presidency with specific responsibility for what was then the Junior Sunday School. Each Sunday I would watch a particular father bring his son to church. The boy would be crying and screaming, begging not to be turned over to the teacher. I watched the father take him to the classroom, push him through the door, and then hold onto the doorknob on the other side—so his son could not come back out—until the teacher had managed to get control of him and settle him down in the class. It was almost as if the father were saying, "I haven't the patience or the time to train this young man. I am turning him over to you, Teacher, to teach him how to be reverent in his Sunday School class."

I had almost the same feeling the other day when Elder Featherstone and I spent a few hours with the president of Brigham Young University. We had asked for an appointment to discuss with him what the priesthood leadership could do to help enforce the standards required of the students when they are accepted at Brigham Young University. As we sat with the leader of this great institution, I was reminded of this experience in Junior Sunday School many years ago. I had the feeling that many parents were bringing their children to the doorstep of BYU, pushing them through the door, then holding onto the doorknob, expecting school administration to assume the responsibility for completing the training of their children.

I have also had the same feeling about some of the missionaries I have had opportunities to interview in the field. Some parents must feel that "if I can only get my child on a mission, it will make up for those years when I have failed to teach him the principles of the gospel."

Of course, the large majority of the students entering Brigham Young University and the young men and women entering the mission field have been trained in good homes and come forth with a spirit

of the gospel, and are exemplary to all the world. However, there is a small percentage who come with problems, and the trend indicates this number is increasing. So today I would like to echo the counsel that has been given almost from the beginning of time as a voice of warning to parents. If you abdicate your responsibilities of teaching and training your children and then expect some other institution to pick up this responsibility and effect an immediate transformation, you expect what never was or never will be.

Importance of strong family life

Today there are many problems in our society, and so many of these problems are symptoms of failure in the home. President Benson has said:

"If we continue with present trends, we can expect to have more emotionally disturbed young people, more divorce, more depression, and more suicide.

"The family is the most effective place to instill lasting values in its members. Where family life is strong and based on principles and practices of the gospel of Jesus Christ, these problems do not as readily appear" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 85; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 59).

Establish a gospel foundation

There are three solutions I would like to call to your attention and emphasize here today. The first is to establish a good, strong, gospel foundation in the home. President Kimball once said: "Our success, individually and as a Church, will largely be determined by how faithfully we focus on living the gospel in the home. Only as we see clearly the responsibilities of each individual and the role of families and homes can we properly understand that priesthood quorums and auxiliary organizations, even wards and stakes, exist primarily to help members live the gospel in the home. Then we can understand that people are more important than programs, and that Church programs should always support and never detract from gospel-centered

family activities" ("Living the Gospel in the Home," *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 101).

I am afraid too many of us have had the experience in life of finding out how difficult it is to establish basic family traditions and practices after our children have grown into their teenage years. It is then that we realize how much easier it would have been to establish these practices early in their lives. How important it is that gospel training begin right at the start when we accept a new little spirit into our home.

In addition to reading fairy tales to our children, we should build a consistent, planned program of introducing the principles of the gospel through Bible and Book of Mormon stories, stories of our current-day prophets, and also of our family histories, which bring a heritage of gospel living into the lives of our children. We should carefully watch their television time to be certain they are tuned to the right programs. We are blessed in this day to have alternatives to programs of violence and sin. The video market has expanded to offer us choices of programs which are proper for family entertainment and learning. We should be certain there is family prayer, night and morning, weekly family home evenings, and regular attendance at our Sunday meetings. And then we should plan time for an activity day when we can teach children how to work and how to play.

This is a responsibility that cannot be abandoned. It rests solely upon the shoulders of parents to establish a gospel foundation in the lives of their children. Of course, there are other organizations that can help, but we should want to be certain that we know what they are learning, and that we take the time and have the patience to determine carefully and in a planned, organized way, that they are growing up with a sure foundation on which to build their lives.

Things of the world

The second area of concern in training children is not to allow them to be caught up so much in the things of the world. It was interesting to me, as we

discussed concerns of students at BYU with the president, that he remarked that the students from the farms where they had been taught to work, save, and conserve were the ones who seldom stepped out of line in violating school standards. Students whose parents had spoiled them with worldly goods were the ones who seemed to create most of the problems. It was the student who arrived at school driving an expensive, fancy car who seemed to think he was above abiding by university standards.

Brigham Young taught:

"I believe in indulging children, in a reasonable way. If the little girls want dolls, shall they have them? Yes. But must they be taken to the dressmaker's to be dressed? No. Let the girls learn to cut and sew the clothing for their dolls, and in a few years they will know how to make a dress for themselves and others. Let the little boys have tools, and let them make their sleds, little wagons, etc., and when they grow up, they are acquainted with the use of tools and can build a carriage, a house, or anything else" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 210).

Teach the joy of honest labor

Third, children need to be taught the joy of honest labor and experience the satisfaction which results from seeing a job well done. They do not need everything the neighbor's children across the street are receiving.

Of course, we want them to develop their talents, but do they need to enroll in every athletic camp or every cultural development course which comes along?

I am shocked as I become aware that in so many homes, many of the children do not know how to make a bed, care for their clothing, squeeze a tube of toothpaste to conserve, turn off the lights, set a proper table, mow a lawn, or care for a vegetable garden. These simple acts of cleanliness, order, and conservation will bless their lives every day that they live and prepare them to become self-sufficient when they reach an age when they must

be out on their own. Teach them the basic knowledge that the earth is the Lord's. He has a marvelous system of replenishment and renewal so long as we care for, conserve, and waste not.

Brigham Young again counseled:

"Mothers, will you be missionaries? We will appoint you a mission to teach your children their duty, and instead of ruffles and fine dresses to adorn the body, teach them that which will adorn their minds. Let what you have to clothe them with be neat and clean and nice. Teach them cleanliness and purity of body and the principles of salvation, and they will delight to come to these meetings" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, pp. 210-11).

Dress modestly

President Kimball delivered a great talk many years ago at Brigham Young University entitled "A Style of Our Own." He encouraged us not to be among those who would follow worldly, immodest styles, but to have the courage to dress in a way which will send a message that our standards are different. Our dress will reflect the way we intend to live, founded on principles of the gospel of our Lord and Savior. It is impossible to expect a child who has been taught to love to dress in the immodest style trends of the day, to then change overnight to an entirely different wardrobe when they enter a Church university or a missionary training center, or when they are married in the temple, or even when they dress for the Sabbath day. Modest, proper styles must be taught almost from birth.

I know a little girl who is the last child in a large family in which the other children are all boys. I guess the shock of being a girl in this big family of boys has made her keenly aware of the fact that she is different from the other children. Her mother has wisely taught her that the boys wear trousers and that she wears dresses. Now you cannot get her to wear anything else but a modest dress. I am certain she will have no problem adjusting to Church dress standards anytime in her life because there will be no need for change.

This is something she has been taught from the very beginning of her life. How easy it will be for her to accept the proper dress standard as she moves from child to youth to adult.

Now, before I receive letters from upset women telling me that I said they should not wear slacks, save your post-age. I did not say that, although I don't think they are appropriate for the Sabbath day. What I am saying is that we have established a dress standard which requires a modest, wholesome style. And the best way to ensure that this standard will be comfortable and acceptable when it is required to be worn is to see that it is taught and practiced throughout a child's life. The way we dress is usually a good indicator of how we will act.

Prepare children

Missions, Church universities, seminaries, and institutes do a tremendous job in establishing gospel standards in the lives of all those who will partake of these grand opportunities. However, their contribution is so much more enhanced if the students or the missionaries come prepared to receive and serve, rather than come to be reformed. Again from the counsel of Brigham Young:

"Let us live so that the spirit of our religion will live within us, then we have peace, joy, happiness and contentment, which makes such pleasant fathers, pleasant mothers, pleasant children, pleasant households, neighbors, communities and cities. That is worth living for, and I do think that the Latter-day Saints ought to strive for this" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 204).

May the Lord bless us with the desire to instill in the lives of our children a standard that will always be acceptable to the gospel of our Lord and Savior. I give you my witness that this is his work in which we are engaged, and I pray that we will be earnestly involved in bringing about an understanding in the hearts and souls of our children. This is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to

us. It will now be our privilege to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott, who was sustained yesterday as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Richard G. Scott

A resolve to know and do God's will

It is understandable that when one has received a call and been conveyed a trust that will completely change his life forever, feelings would be sensitive and emotions very near the surface.

As I have struggled to begin to understand this sacred assignment and all that it implies, I have spent much time pouring out the feelings of my heart to our beloved Father in Heaven. I have pled that he would guide me and strengthen me that I may serve him and his beloved Son as well as I am able.

There has distilled within my mind and heart a resolve that I have covenanted with the Lord to obey. It is to live to be worthy to know the will of the Lord and to live to have, with his help, the capacity and courage to carry out that will—and to desire nothing else.

I make that same commitment with each of you today.

Now, may my prayers be answered that I may help you who are struggling with a personal challenge or striving to overcome a debilitating habit or appetite, or are anguishing over a loved one who has gone astray.

I wish to share with you some of my most treasured friends, that as they have helped me, they may help you now and throughout your life.

Know, live, and share Book of Mormon truths

First, some background. During the dedication of the Mexico City Temple, I had one of those singular experiences that readjusts the course of a life. It occurred during the eighth dedicatory session, where many of the men and women leaders of Mexico and Central America were

present. When unexpectedly asked to speak, I attempted to convey the strong impressions that poured into my heart. I spoke of those beyond the veil who, in fulfillment of prophecy, had served, suffered, and given greatly to form the foundation which permitted the opening of a new era of the work.

I expressed a feeling to plead in behalf of former prophets who had prepared and protected the sacred records of the Book of Mormon. I sensed that they were saddened as they see us walk from place to place with an unopened Book of Mormon under our arm or see it kept in homes where it gathers dust and is not read, pondered, nor its contents applied.

The Book of Mormon was prepared by divine assignment for the blessing and enlightenment of all those who receive it.

As I spoke, I realized in my heart that all the efforts that I had expended for six years in trying to help those beloved leaders overcome the effects of false traditions and learn to apply the teachings of the Lord would have been better directed had I strongly encouraged them to ponder and apply the teachings of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon contains messages that were divinely placed there to show how to correct the influence of false tradition and how to receive a fullness of life. It teaches how to resolve the problems and challenges that we face today that were foreseen by the Lord. In that book he has provided the way to correct the serious errors of life, but this guidance is of no value if it remains locked in a closed book.

I witnessed that it is not sufficient that we should treasure the Book of Mormon, nor that we testify that it is of God. We must know its truths, incorporate them into our lives, and share them with others. I felt an overwhelming love

for the people and an urgent desire that all would comprehend the value of the Book of Mormon.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Ezra Taft Benson, then President of the Quorum of the Twelve, invited me to join him in a private room in the temple. He asked me to be seated, drew his chair close to mine, looked penetrately into my eyes, and with an earnestness that I will never forget, witnessed of his profound conviction that every member of the Church must learn to use the Book of Mormon as the Lord intended.

As he spoke I knew that the Lord had inspired him to have those feelings. I had a witness borne to my heart that he was speaking the will of the Lord.

The influence of these two friends, President Benson and the Book of Mormon, has comforted and sustained me in times of intense need. I would share them with you in your hour of need.

President Benson: a true friend

Now President Benson is the prophet—a worthy, righteous son of Father in Heaven, who, by consistent, proper use of agency throughout his life, has acquired virtue and nobility of character that have qualified him to be the mouthpiece of the Lord to all of his children on earth.

As he enters his ninetieth year, it is difficult for him to fulfill his desire to travel throughout the world so that each of us can personally greet him. Yet as we read or listen to his inspired messages and seek to apply them, we will feel the warmth and companionship of a true friend who knows how to help us.

The Book of Mormon: a precious friend

I offer you the Book of Mormon, a precious friend provided by a loving Savior. Within its pages is truth that brings comfort, guidance, peace, and yes, the companionship of other true friends. Between its covers you will find the friendship and worthy example of Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Benjamin, Alma, Ammon, Helaman, Mormon, Moroni, and so many

others. They will rekindle courage and mark the path to faith and obedience. They will help you overcome the bitterness and anguish of transgression.

Jesus Christ: the perfect friend

More important, all of them, without exception, will lift your vision to the perfect friend—our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus the Christ.

I love President Benson. I love the Book of Mormon, the Bible, and the other holy scriptures. But I adore this friend.

I cannot comprehend his power, his majesty, his perfections. But I do understand something of his love, his compassion, his mercy.

There is no burden he cannot lift.

There is no heart he cannot purify and fill with joy.

There is no life he cannot cleanse and restore when one is obedient to his teachings.

Let my other friends guide you to him, but find him yourself through humble, sincere prayer, obedience, and faith.

It is written:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16-17).

The Book of Mormon records these comforting words of the Savior:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"... Blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

"... Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

"... Blessed are all they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.

"... Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

"... Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (3 Nephi 12:3-8).

God will answer your prayers

When Jesus prayed to his father in humility, faith, and obedience for others, his Father answered. When he prayed for strength and comfort in his hour of greatest need and took upon himself the sins of the world and gave his atoning sacrifice, that upon repentance we could enjoy the miracle of forgiveness, his Father answered.

He is your Father; pray to him. If your life is in disarray and you feel uncomfortable and unworthy to pray because you are not clean, don't worry. He already knows about all of that. He is waiting for you to kneel in humility and take the first few steps. Pray for strength. Pray for others to be led to support you

and guide you and lift you. Pray that the love of the Savior will pour into your heart. Pray that the miracle of the Atonement will bring forgiveness because you are willing to change. I know that those prayers will be answered, for God loves you. His Son gave his life for you. I know they will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Scott, for that touching and moving expression. We welcome you most warmly into the new relationship which you will enjoy.

We shall now hear from Sister Michaelene P. Grassli, General President of the Primary Association.

President Michaelene P. Grassli

Spiritual preparation brings peace

Thank you, President Hinckley. Elder Scott, you have touched our hearts, and with our hearts we sustain you.

Seven-year-old Jamie loved her mother dearly. The family had known for nearly a year that their wife and mother was dying of cancer. The father and seven children fasted and prayed; they pled with the Lord to heal her. Everything possible was done for their mother, yet at the end of three painfully difficult months, she passed from this life.

In the first hours following her death, the father brought the grieving family together. After prayer, the children went to their own rooms to prepare for bed. Jamie, who had spent many hours with her mother and was devoted to her, knelt at her own bedside. "Heavenly Father," she prayed through her tears, "we thank thee for the great mom you gave us. We thank thee for helping us try to make her well. Help us to be good so we can live with her again." Without a hint of bitterness, this little seven-year-old girl continued for several minutes in a sweet attitude of peaceful prayer, reflect-

ing her understanding and acceptance of her mother's death.

Jamie was a child at peace. How did she come to that peace? She had been prepared by parents with spiritual understanding. Such preparation brings peace.

Bestow a legacy of peace

I have chosen to speak about our children—precious children of our Heavenly Father throughout the earth. I pray that my message will be received and understood, for these are among the most valiant spirits to come into the world. We can do no less than to bestow on them a legacy of peace.

Our Heavenly Father has promised peace to his children. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (3 Nephi 22:13). Peace in the Lord can give them freedom from self-doubt, freedom from fear, freedom from the confinement of their environment, freedom from enslaving habits. His peace can free them to unfold from the tender buds they are to the mature and fruitful adults they can be.

Just as the fragile bud contains all of the essential elements to develop into a lovely plant or flower, so does each child come to us with the potential for individual self-fulfillment of his eternal destiny. In both instances, in order that what is inside can be fully developed, it must be nurtured from the outside. In nature, plants require light, water, air, and nutrients to thrive. The human spirit thrives on love, knowledge of its origin, and teachings of a spiritual nature. It is important that we provide a favorable environment for spiritual growth and the peace that will accompany it. This peace I speak of will result in quiet assurances even in the midst of worldly pressures and turmoil.

Brothers and sisters, the children need our help. They need us to prepare them. They need us to help them obtain the peace of the Lord. Today is neither too early nor too late to prepare the children, and anyone can do it. A young, new family just beginning; an established family with children of several ages; a family with one parent; grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors; and kind, understanding church leaders and teachers—all of us can teach children of the Lord.

Set a proper example

We begin by teaching what we are. The children need us; they need to see in us what they can become. They need to see us keeping the commandments. We must come unto the Lord and seek for the peace of the gospel in *our own* lives. "Learn of me," the Lord said, "and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me" (D&C 19:23). When we are at peace, then our children can be at peace.

A wise bishop made this observation: "I have seen families where parents are at home with the gospel, where gospel principles are a matter-of-fact, everyday way of life, where parents treat their children with courtesy and respect with the full understanding that they are children of God. In these homes, the children seem to be at peace because their parents have given them a clear message. They know they are children of God. They feel

their worth and have focus to their lives, knowing that eternity is their goal."

To some, a family like the ones described by that bishop may seem impossible to attain. No family is perfect—all families are made up of human beings with mortal weaknesses, who sometimes go astray. But family members, including parents, can begin where they are and learn and grow together.

Meet, pray, and read as a family

Now, we have been promised that family home evening, family prayer, and reading the scriptures together can strengthen and give direction to each member of a family and can knit the family together. If you haven't been having family home evening or family prayer, you may feel awkward about beginning. That's all right. Do it anyway. Gather the family together, tell them that although you haven't been doing so, you want to begin.

Now, I must warn you that Satan will attempt to thwart your efforts because family strength is a threat to his work. So persevere, even though it takes some effort and planning to overcome attitudes and obstacles.

When the family gathers for evening prayer, it is a good time for sharing the day's experiences, reading the scriptures, and sharing testimonies. Children especially need to hear the testimonies of their parents. One family repeats one article of faith every evening for a week, or memorizes a scripture, or recites books in the Book of Mormon. Another family focuses on one child or a parent each day with each member telling something good about that person. It takes just a few minutes. Children of all ages need to hear positive observations about themselves—especially from their parents.

Teach the stories of Jesus

Immerse the children in the stories of Jesus so that they can know him and can imagine what it might have been like to have lived when he was on earth. Tell them how he took the children on his knee

and blessed them and prayed for them. Tell them how the people knew he was the Son of God.

When I was a child I loved to hear about the Savior's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Many people heard Jesus was coming to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. They knew he was the Son of God. They went out to meet him. Imagine what it must have been like to be a child in that happy crowd. The scripture says it was "a very great multitude" (Matthew 21:8). They were probably waiting along the narrow streets of Jerusalem becoming more and more excited as they strained to see if he was coming yet. Then as he came into view, riding on a donkey, can't you just hear a great cheer going up? They spread their clothes and tree branches on the ground for the donkey to walk on, like they did for kings, and they waved palm leaves in the air. They cried "Hosanna to the Son of David: . . . Hosanna in the highest" (Matthew 21:9). Oh, wouldn't you love to have been there?

Yes, tell them about the Savior so they'll trust him, so they'll develop a desire to be like him, and want to be with him again. Yes, our homes can provide peace for the children. Blessings be on you parents.

And blessings be on you devoted church leaders who hold the welfare and spiritual growth of children in high priority—priesthood and Primary leaders who minister to the children. At Primary, children are taught of the Lord. A wise stake Primary president in Australia has as her goal that when the children come to Primary, they will feel the Spirit of the Lord. Those will be children at peace.

The Book of Mormon brings peace

President Benson, I'm proud to say that Primary children have this year read and discussed the Book of Mormon. Nine-year-old Matt in Wisconsin spoke in the children's sacrament meeting presentation in his ward recently about something he had learned that brought him peace. He said:

"When my father told our family that we would be moving from Denver to Wisconsin, my mother reminded us of Lehi's family. Like them, I was leaving the only home I had known, all my friends, my school, and my ward. Luckily we got to bring all our possessions with us, though they were in storage for three months, and we missed having a house and our 'precious things.'

"My mother reminded us of how Nephi accepted this challenge—willingly—knowing that the Lord would 'prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.'

"I have learned that I can do without things, but not without my family. My brothers and sisters and I have tried to be more like Nephi than his complaining brothers. I am grateful for the things that the Book of Mormon teaches us."

Yes, when children are taught of the Lord, we bestow on them a gift, a legacy of peace, that can lead them to eternal life. We must not fail them.

May all our children have the blessing to be taught of the Lord that they might be, indeed, children at peace, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "All That Dwell below the Skies" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Does anyone doubt that the Primary is in good hands? Thank you, Sister Grassli, for your statement concerning peace in the lives of children.

The choir has sung "All That Dwell below the Skies." The choir and congregation will now join together in singing "The Spirit of God." Following that, Elder Wm. Grant Bangerter, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder Wm. Grant Bangerter

Coming near the end of the conference, I feel advance approval for my remarks, since much of what I had planned to say has already been used by previous speakers.

Although we die, life is eternal

The great preoccupation of humanity is with dying. The general tendency, of course, is to try to avoid it. From time immemorial, the dream has been to extend life indefinitely. There have been potions and elixirs which would supposedly protect a person from death. Legends of the fountain of youth have led men to the ends of the earth.

Things are not so different today. From wrinkle creams to vitamins to exercise programs; from preoccupation with cholesterol, climate control, or health resorts to innovations in clothing and food preparations and supplements—all promise an extension of our years.

The medical profession is dedicated to saving human life, as are the countless laws, regulations, and customs of our society.

It is true that many of these life-saving efforts have a beneficial effect on the quality of life. The end result, however, is that we die anyway. From Adam to Abraham, from Peter and Paul to Henry VIII, George Washington and the rest—all have departed with their generations, and so will we.

Where did they go, this countless flowering of humanity?

Is there a purpose in such a temporary existence? Some say there is not. The great question of Job haunts us all: "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). Of course he will! The answer is found in the doctrine of eternal life. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news, the glad tidings.

Even those who don't think they will live again or who don't want to live again will nevertheless arise from the grave and live again. There is nothing they can do to stop it, since life is eternal.

A dear friend told of the passing away of his atheistic father. As he bid good-bye to his family who had gathered around, he expressed no hope of any future, saying, "No, this is the end."

Then, as the last moment came, he suddenly opened his eyes and said distinctly, "Mother, how good to see you! Sister, you look lovely. How beautiful it all is!" Then he died. What a surprise it must have been for him! I hope he was happy about it.

Eternal happiness comes through Christ

Now, in view of the almost universal concern over the quality of *mortal* life, and since some people seem to be happier than others, we might ask the question about *eternal* life: "How can I be sure to have a happy experience there?" And remember, eternity is a long, long time. Well, you can listen to those who know about it. Atheists don't know about it. Careless, worldly, materialistic people don't know about it or, at best, they are unconcerned.

Who does know? Well, God knows. He is the Eternal Father. And Christ knows. He controls the plan which can bring the quality of happiness. And his prophets know. And so do those who listen to the prophets and understand the scriptures. Even in the Church the doctrine of eternal life is not always well understood or appreciated. If it were, many members would do more about it. After all, the quality of that eternal existence is in our own hands. Lehi said in the Book of Mormon:

"Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah" (2 Nephi 2:8).

For the Savior said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: *no man* cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6; italics added).

Deaf ears and hearts

The night the angel Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith "he said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants" (Joseph Smith—History 1:34).

You would think that everyone would want to know what the Savior said to the inhabitants on the American continent. The truth is, however, that many don't. They don't want to hear revelations, and they don't want the gospel to be restored.

I had an interesting experience years ago as we were returning from South America on a ship. Three ministers were on board, and soon each one came to me and asked if there might be an opportunity to talk together to learn what the Mormons believed. One was a Methodist, one a Presbyterian, and one a Disciple of Christ.

We arranged a visit together and spent a pleasant hour, they asking questions and I giving answers. Our visit was warm, friendly, and congenial. After about the first ten minutes, they began to look at each other and say: "Isn't it interesting—he has an answer for every question." And they repeated this comment over and over.

A day or two later the Methodist brother stopped to talk with me, saying, "I have been thinking of what you told us the other day. I think you know too much. I wonder if God wants us to know everything." I could tell that he was offended at my knowledge of the revelations.

Other people are simply not interested, having been carried away by selfish interests and material possessions.

Elder EIRay Christiansen told of a wealthy man in Denmark who was converted to the gospel and had migrated to Utah. His commitment caused the loss of much of his fortune, but, after settling here, he again had the ability to amass riches and, in the process, lost his faith and testimony. As his brethren tried to

counsel him about his eternal purpose, he would not listen. Finally one of them said to him, "Lars, it is not good to think only of money. You cannot take it with you, you know."

Lars answered, "Vat is that you say?" and he was told again, "I say you cannot take it with you."

Lars responded, "Vell, den, I will not go."

Elder Christiansen's report was that he had gone anyway. And we will go as well.

Joseph Smith tells us that "happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 255).

There are several fundamentals which those who seek to enjoy quality in their eternal existence would want to consider.

Know and follow Jesus Christ

We begin by knowing of Jesus Christ and determining to follow him. Peter said:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . .

"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: . . . three thousand souls" (Acts 2:38, 40–41).

Press forward and serve

Then, we "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ . . . and endure to the end, [and] thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20). We are to take upon us His name and always remember Him and keep His commandments (see Moroni 4, 5; D&C 20:77–79). That seems to be keeping our repentance up to date.

Now comes the call to serve. We serve God and our fellowmen. The parable

of the Good Samaritan came in answer to the lawyer's question: "What shall I do to obtain eternal life? . . . Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:25, 27).

In the portrayal of the Judgment Day in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, we are called to serve those who are

- an hungry,
- thirsty,
- a stranger,
- naked,
- sick,
- or in prison (see vs. 35–36).

Evidently those who do not undertake this service will not qualify. As the Lord says:

"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:45–46).

Importance of the priesthood

To receive the blessings that accompany this service we are given the priesthood and its power. It has been called "the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God" (D&C 107:3). "And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, . . . no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live" (D&C 84:21–22).

And furthermore, "Wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood" (D&C 84:42).

Temple ordinances and covenants

Now, the way of God leads us to the temple. In the past eight years the number of temples in the Church has increased from seventeen to forty-one, with six more in the process of preparation. These sacred edifices fulfill an eternal purpose.

Just as the ancient Israelites looked to the temple for their salvation, even so will those who are in earnest find in the temple the pathway to the presence of the Father and the Son. There they receive holy ordinances as they covenant to keep the commandments.

The doctrine of salvation teaches us that we do not step into the vestibule of the gospel merely by confessing Christ or by being baptized. If we take it seriously, we will reach for all the blessings. Remember, Laman and Lemuel turned their back on the tree of life. They joined the world and lost the promise.

Perform temple service

Finally, understanding the doctrine of salvation makes it clear that the plan of God is to redeem all his children on the basis of their repentance—even those who died without a knowledge of the truth.

And so, once again, we come to the temple and, according to the promise of Malachi, we provide the ordinances by proxy for those who did not have the privilege of knowing the gospel on earth. We know that the teaching of the gospel and the opportunity to repent and be worthy of baptism is provided for those who are now in the world of spirits.

The privilege of returning to the temple helps us to obtain the spirit of the work performed there. We perform this service especially for our ancestors. Moroni also said to Joseph Smith, quoting the words of Malachi, "I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet" (Joseph Smith—History 1:38). The hearts of us, the living children, will turn to our fathers—those ancestors who have died—and will provide them with the ordinances without which their redemption would not be possible.

Immortality or the resurrection will happen to us all. It is an unearned benefit made possible through the grace or free gift of Christ. Eternal life in happiness and glory in association with those we love will be the reward only of those who exercise faith in Jesus Christ through obedience to his commandments.

I have known of Jesus Christ since before I can remember. I was taught to pray to God in his name since infancy. I don't believe there has been a single day of my life when I have not openly sought

for his blessings, his spirit, and his protection. I want his type of eternal life. It has come to mean everything to me. I know that the gospel is true, since I have heard the voice of God through his Spirit confirm and witness it to me. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Wm. Grant Bangerter, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder David B. Haight

The Spirit of God

As we all stood a few moments ago and joined in singing, "The Spirit of God like a fire is burning" (*Hymns* [1985], no. 2), I could visualize that beautiful little temple in Kirtland, Ohio, built by valiant Saints during their poverty and relentless persecution but sustained by their abundant faith in God. In my mind's eye I could see the temple filled with devout Saints awaiting the moment of dedication, and many gathered outside hoping to hear the inspired prayer of their prophet, for they knew "the authority of God was upon him" (Matthias Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964], p. 68). And then that moment of joy that must have filled their hearts as they joined in singing a new hymn, "The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning," which was hastily scribbled on the back of an envelope by Brother Phelps, so as not to lose the spirit of heaven that he felt.

We, as did they, have sung today:

The visions and blessings of old are returning,
And angels are coming to visit the earth....
The knowledge and power of God are expanding;
The veil o'er the earth is beginning to burst.
We'll sing and we'll shout with the armies of heaven,
Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb!
(*Hymns* [1985], no. 2)

The Spirit filled their hearts then, as we have been blessed this afternoon.

Comparisons with pioneer heritage

How grateful we are for our pioneer heritage and early history as the gospel has been revealed and restored in purity and truth. Only 150 years separate the sacrifices and struggles of Kirtland from today's anxieties and personal challenges.

"I suppose every Mormon [man and] woman [have] measured [themselves] at one time or another against [their pioneer ancestors]," wrote Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. "Am I as stalwart? As self-reliant? As devoted to the gospel? As willing to sacrifice?" Could I leave my wife and children without food or means to support themselves while I responded to a call to serve a mission abroad, or take these same innocent ones, dependent solely upon me for their survival, into hostile territory to set up housekeeping and provide a livelihood for them? Or, were I a woman, "could I crush my best china to add glitter to a temple, bid loving farewell to a missionary husband as I lay in a wagon bed with fever and chills, leave all that I possessed and walk across the plains to an arid wilderness?" ("A Pioneer Is Not a Woman Who Makes Her Own Soap," *Ensign*, June 1978, p. 54).

Some may feel that their lives of relative ease and convenience lack the vigor and fortitude of those who survived the pioneer days, that they can never measure up to the toil, struggles, and challenges our pioneer ancestors faced and emerge the victor.

Yet, "Our challenges are just as important as those of the past. Our testing is as crucial; our contributions may be as great. . . .

" . . . An essential quality of the first pioneers was optimism, an ability to see new possibilities in a strange and unsettling environment. To beautify the desert, they needed faith in God, but they also needed faith in themselves and in their ability to help shape the world. The need for that faith has not diminished. . . .

" . . . A pioneer is not [necessarily] a woman who makes her own soap" or a man who grubs sagebrush from the land (*Ensign*, June 1978, pp. 54-55). Pioneers are those who take up their burdens and walk toward the future. With vision and with courage they make the desert blossom and they press on toward new frontiers.

"Go ye into all the world"

The Lord emphasized one such frontier when he declared, "purify your hearts before me; and then go ye into all the world, and preach my gospel unto every creature who has not received it" (D&C 112:28).

An inspired prophet, David O. McKay, expanded this fundamental principle in 1959 while at the Hyde Park chapel in London, England. He proclaimed these four simple words: "Every member a missionary."

In 1974 another prophet, Spencer W. Kimball, broadened our vision as he encouraged us to serve more diligently by lengthening our stride.

Our living prophet today, President Ezra Taft Benson, declared: "Missionary work—the preaching of the gospel—has been the major activity of the true Church of Christ whenever the gospel has been upon the earth" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, p. 127; or *Improvement Era*, June 1970, p. 95).

Our sacred, personal duty

Each of us has a sacred duty to personally assist the accomplishment of the mission of the Church in proclaiming the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, perfecting the Saints to receive the ordinances of

the gospel, and the teaching of the doctrines of salvation and the temple.

"All three are part of one work—to assist our Father in Heaven and His Son . . . in Their grand and glorious mission 'to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man' (Moses 1:39)" (Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, p. 3; or *Ensign*, May 1981, p. 5).

In the spirit of these prophetic watchwords, there is a continuing but growing need to extend the frontiers of new member conversion, fellowshiping, and activating the lost or the offended or ignored far beyond our previous levels.

The need for missionary couples

In the past few months remarkable indications of interest in the Church have emerged in nations that have had restrictions. We sense providential opportunities beginning to appear where mature couples who have the experience, sensitivity, and insight into old-world customs and respect for tradition may be able to begin planting seeds of the restored gospel in good soil to flower and bloom.

For some time we have been encouraging qualified mature couples to serve full-time missions. President Kimball and President Benson have stated that the goal of physically able couples and some women who may now be single is to serve a mission. The need remains. Indeed, the requests from mission presidents for more—many more—couples are becoming more pressing.

While firefighters were battling roaring forest fires in the West recently, two grandmothers—Altha Clark, from Texas, and Hazel Stills, from Florida—kindled countless spiritual flames by creating new "interest of people who [had] investigated the Church for years, but who needed a firm, loving nudge to accept baptism," and with caring fellowshiping, reached out to the less-active members.

"They don't take no for an answer," the second counselor in the Altamont Utah Stake presidency said, "and they [teach] without offending anyone." They combine the Spirit with hard work.

A rancher said the two sisters "have kept us so busy I don't have time to get my hay in. We . . . keep them [booked with people] to teach. In this stake, the full-time missionaries teach very few discussions without a stake missionary or fellowshipper going along."

The two grandmothers travel about one hundred miles a day on unpaved country roads, and the dust and ruts don't slow them down.

While visiting a member's home, these remarkable missionaries asked if she knew someone they could teach.

The sister replied, "my husband."

Directed by the Spirit how to approach this husband, they taught him the gospel and rejoiced with his wife at his baptism.

Fourteen families have now become active and will go to the temple this year because of the efforts of these full-time grandmother missionaries coordinating with the stake missionaries and properly following a plan in fellowshipping new members. A change has come about in the whole stake that has influenced the less active as well as nonmembers. (See *Church News*, 10 Sept. 1988, pp. 8, 9, 12.)

When people are taught and then fellowshipped with warmth and continued interest until they are integrated into the mainstream of the Church, they are "remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way" (Moroni 6:4). By working together, stake missionaries and full-time missionaries are able to keep new converts involved as they gain gospel knowledge and a needed testimony. They are also bringing back into fellowship the less active.

In stressing the need for mature men and women to be about the work of the Lord, President Benson related the experience of his two widowed sisters. One was the mother of ten children and the other the mother of eight. After they had sent their children on missions, they approached their bishops about going on missions themselves. President Benson relates that he remembers well the day a number of years ago when they called him and said, "Guess what? We have received our missionary calls." President

Benson said, "What missionary calls?" And they replied, "We're both going to your old field of labor in England" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, p. 66; or *Ensign*, May 1984, p. 45).

They did go to England and served as companions for twenty months.

Thousands of devoted mature couples and single sisters have touched the lives of many for good. We are grateful for their dedication and courage and oftentimes great personal sacrifice. One couple indicated on their missionary form that they would be ready to go just as soon as they were able to find a home for their eighty hives of bees.

There is an unusual opportunity for qualified individuals to do their utmost to fulfill the Lord's injunction to preach his gospel to the ends of the earth and not only to *teach* but *convert*, as Alma said, that as many "as believed in their preaching, and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away" (Alma 23:6).

The need in Latin America

The Lord's work is blessed to have more than 1,100 couples now serving throughout the world. In Latin America—including Mexico, all of Central America, and South America—there are now 51 missionary couples. From the Rio Grande river in Texas to the southern tip of South America there are 58 missions, and only 51 couples—less than one couple per mission, or, stated another way, one missionary couple to work with more people than live in the entire state of Utah.

For one couple to be assigned to every stake in this vast Latin America area, 278 couples would be needed. Even better would be to have a couple assigned to help two or three wards. To do this we would need another 1,900 couples—just in Latin America. Imagine, 51 now serving where we could effectively use nearly 2,000!

Leaders from our overseas areas indicate similar needs in most parts of the world. One of our pressing challenges is to keep the local leadership trained and ahead of the new members.

It has been estimated that within the United States and Canada there are at least 100,000 Church couples between the ages of fifty-five and seventy. Some researchers estimate that 6,000 couples could serve missions now. The addition of many of these qualified, experienced couples would bring untold blessings not only to precious people waiting to hear the heavenly invitation to "come unto the Christ" and feel of his goodness, but those who answer the call will be blessed also.

The need for gentle encouragement

The Lord instructed in the Doctrine and Covenants, "If ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work" (D&C 4:3). Many of you undoubtedly have the desire but may need some gentle encouragement to complete your decision.

I challenged eight couples in my former home stake in California to set aside their comfortable lives of planned retirement and to bless the Scottish Saints with their gospel knowledge and service.

Arthur Thulin had been a bishop, his wife Myra a skilled teacher. Arthur anxiously wrote that he was nearing seventy and might die in Scotland. I replied, "Arthur, you are going to die somewhere; Scotland is a great place to die—but when you die, die with your boots on, not in a comfortable rocking chair." The Thulins came, blessed the lives of many, and Arthur lived several years after their two-year mission.

Many couples have concerns about leaving their homes and families, or they picture themselves being sent to a developing area of the world or struggling to learn a new language or trying to keep up with the younger missionaries' tracting and work pace.

These concerns are generally unwarranted. Missionary couples are not expected to work at the same pace or follow the schedule of the younger missionaries. Mission presidents are sensitive to each couple's special need and establish activity and assignments that make the best use of abilities, experience, and talents.

With very few exceptions, couples are not assigned to developing areas or to

missions requiring a new language without some experience or a willingness to accept such an assignment.

Emma Lou and Joseph Slagowski could not speak Spanish but were called to the Peru Lima South Mission. They participated in a trial pre-mission language project for mature couples that assists them in learning language skills in their own homes prior to entering the Missionary Training Center for their training. Sister Slagowski writes:

"When our stake president asked us [if] we would be willing to take part in [a new] pre-mission . . . language learning project, we were concerned, but accepted," she said. "I am now sixty-six years old, and school was [never easy] for me.

"Without the pre-Missionary Training Center Spanish program, it would have been impossible. . . . [but] before [we arrived at] the Missionary Training Center I could read Spanish quite well, . . . could pray, and bear testimony of God the Father and Jesus Christ. To me it's a miracle.

"We plan on another Spanish-speaking mission after this one if health permits."

Blessings to those who serve

There are few things that invite the blessings of the Lord into our own lives and into the lives of our family members more powerfully than does missionary service—the broadening of knowledge of gospel principles, a deeper spirituality, a strengthening of one's faith in the Lord, a greater understanding of the workings of the Spirit, and the expanding of one's talents, as promised by the Savior in the parable of the talents.

Though you may have had many years of married life together, you will never work more closely and more intensely with one another in a more rewarding effort. Your love will deepen, and you will discover wonderful new dimensions of your companion's inner soul. You will have a greater feeling of unity, and a heavenly relationship will be strengthened.

"A witness unto all nations"

If you as a couple meet the personal qualifications, don't wait to be asked. Go to your bishop. He is probably waiting for you. Humbly and prayerfully talk about your plans and desires, even though you may not be quite ready. He will counsel and guide you.

Study the scriptures daily, take care of your health, and start your own mission savings account, just as you have encouraged your children and grandchildren to do. You might even begin learning a second language.

Eternal justice requires that all of God's children have adequate opportunity to hear and receive the gospel message. Christ taught, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

Now, my dear friends, as we near the closing moments of this historic conference and receive counsel from our prophet, I add my witness of his divine calling to lead this church as God's holy prophet upon the earth today. We sustain and love him dearly. Our philosophy of life is in accord with divine purposes and, if followed in our actions, will lead us unerringly to eternal life. I leave you this witness and my blessings as you move forward to fulfill your commitments and to live the Lord's commandments. This work is true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder David B. Haight has just spoken to us.

Before hearing President Benson's concluding remarks, we express our sincere appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus, the Salt Lake Tongan Choir, and the great Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during this conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given. We thank the Relief Society and the Church Health Unit nurses who have been on hand to render service, and the ushers and interpreters.

We express our appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries. We should thank also the physicians who quietly and effectively are on hand here.

We shall now be pleased to listen to President Ezra Taft Benson, our beloved prophet, after which the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Testimony." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Devere Harris of the First Quorum of the Seventy. This great conference will then stand adjourned for six months.

President Ezra Taft Benson

My beloved brethren and sisters, my heart is full and my feelings tender as we conclude this great general conference of the Church.

We have been richly blessed as we have listened to the counsel and testimonies of those who have spoken to us.

As a special witness of Jesus Christ, and as His humble servant, it is now my obligation and privilege, as the Spirit dictates, to bear pure testimony and witness

to that which I know to be true (see Alma 4:19). This I will do.

Premortal existence

I testify that we are the spirit offspring of a loving God, our Heavenly Father (see Acts 17:29; 1 Nephi 17:36). He has a great plan of salvation whereby His children might be perfected as He is and might have a fulness of joy as He enjoys (see 1 Nephi 10:18; 2 Nephi 2:25; Alma 24:14, 34:9; 3 Nephi 12:48, 28:10).

I testify that in our premortal state our Elder Brother in the spirit, even Jesus Christ, became our foreordained Savior in the Father's plan of salvation (see Mosiah 4:6–7, Alma 34:9). He is the captain of our salvation and the only means through whom we can return to our Father in Heaven to gain that fulness of joy (see Hebrews 2:10, Mosiah 3:17, Alma 38:9).

I testify that Lucifer was also in the council of heaven. He sought to destroy the agency of man. He rebelled (see Moses 4:3). There was a war in heaven, and a third of the hosts were cast to the earth and denied a body (see Revelation 12:7–9, D&C 29:36–37). Lucifer is the enemy of all righteousness and seeks the misery of all mankind (see 2 Nephi 2:18, 27; Mosiah 4:14).

I testify that all those who come into mortality accepted our Father's plan (see Abraham 3:26). Having proved faithful in their first estate in heaven, they are now subject to the test of mortality in this second estate. That test entails doing all things whatsoever the Lord requires (see Abraham 3:25). Those who prove faithful in this second estate will have glory added upon their heads forever and ever (see Abraham 3:26).

God guides us

I testify that God reveals His will to all men through the Light of Christ (see Moroni 7:16, D&C 93:2, John 1:9). They receive the additional light of the gift of the Holy Ghost through the laying on of hands by God's authorized servants following baptism (see Articles of Faith 1:4, D&C 20:41).

I testify that throughout the ages God has spoken to His children through His prophets (see Amos 3:7, Helaman 8:13–20). Only when His children rejected the prophets were the prophets taken out of their midst, and then tragedy followed (see 1 Nephi 3:17–18, 7:14; Helaman 13:24–27).

Jesus' birth, ministry, and sacrifice

I testify that Christ was born into mortality with Mary as His mother and

our Heavenly Father as His father (see 1 Nephi 11:18–21, Mosiah 3:8). He lived a sinless life, providing us a perfect example (see D&C 45:4; 3 Nephi 12:48, 27:27). He worked out the great Atonement, which, through His grace, provides for every soul a resurrection and, for the faithful, the means to become exalted in the celestial kingdom (see Articles of Faith 1:3; 2 Nephi 25:23; Mosiah 4:6–7; Alma 11:41–45; D&C 76:50–70, 132:19).

I testify that during His mortal ministry Christ established His church on the earth (see Matthew 16:18, Acts 2:47, 3 Nephi 21:22). He called and ordained men to be Apostles and prophets with authority so that what they bound on earth would be bound in heaven (see Matthew 16:19, John 15:16). They received revelation, which provided new scripture (see 2 Peter 1:20–21, D&C 68:4).

The Apostasy and Restoration

I testify that a world so wicked that it killed the Son of God soon began killing the Apostles and prophets and so plunged itself into a spiritual dark age (see 2 Thessalonians 2:2–7). Scripture ended, apostasy spread, and the church that Christ established during His earthly ministry ceased to exist (see 2 Nephi 27:4–5).

I testify that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820, thus bringing to an end the long night of apostasy (see Joseph Smith—History 1:15–20). To Joseph Smith appeared other beings, including John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John, who ordained him with authority to act in the name of God (see Joseph Smith—History 1:68–72, D&C 27:5–13). The church and kingdom of God was restored in these latter days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with all the gifts, rights, powers, doctrines, officers, and blessings of the former-day Church (see D&C 65, 115:3–4).

The Book of Mormon

I testify that through the Book of Mormon God has provided for our day

tangible evidence that Jesus is the Christ and that Joseph Smith is His prophet (see D&C 20:8-33). This other testament of Jesus Christ is a scriptural account of the early inhabitants of America. It was translated by Joseph Smith through the gift and power of God (see D&C 135:3). Those who will read and ponder the Book of Mormon and ask our Eternal Father in the name of Christ if it is true may know for themselves of its truthfulness through the power of the Holy Ghost, provided they will ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ (see Moroni 10:3-5).

America

I testify that America is a choice land (see 2 Nephi 1:5). God raised up the founding fathers of the United States of America and established the inspired Constitution (see D&C 101:77-80). This was the required prologue for the restoration of the gospel (see 3 Nephi 21:4). America will be a blessed land unto the righteous forever and is the base from which God will continue to direct the worldwide latter-day operations of His kingdom (see 2 Nephi 1:7).

Living prophets

I testify that there have been, and there are now, and there will be legal successors to the Prophet Joseph Smith who hold the keys of the kingdom of God on earth, even the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see D&C 21:1-7, 107:91-92, 112:15). He receives revelation from God to direct His kingdom. Associated with him are others who are prophets, seers, and revelators, even those who make up the presiding quorums of the Church, namely the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (see D&C 112:30).

Confrontations between good and evil

I testify that wickedness is rapidly expanding in every segment of our society (see D&C 1:14-16, 84:49-53). It is more highly organized, more cleverly

disguised, and more powerfully promoted than ever before. Secret combinations lusting for power, gain, and glory are flourishing. A secret combination that seeks to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries is increasing its evil influence and control over America and the entire world (see Ether 8:18-25).

I testify that the church and kingdom of God is increasing in strength. Its numbers are growing, as is the faithfulness of its faithful members. It has never been better organized or equipped to perform its divine mission.

I testify that as the forces of evil increase under Lucifer's leadership and as the forces of good increase under the leadership of Jesus Christ, there will be growing battles between the two until the final confrontation. As the issues become clearer and more obvious, all mankind will eventually be required to align themselves either for the kingdom of God or for the kingdom of the devil. As these conflicts rage, either secretly or openly, the righteous will be tested. God's wrath will soon shake the nations of the earth and will be poured out on the wicked without measure (see Joseph Smith—History 1:45, D&C 1:9). But God will provide strength for the righteous and the means of escape; and eventually and finally truth will triumph (see 1 Nephi 22:15-23).

It is time

I testify that it is time for every man to set in order his own house both temporally and spiritually. It is time for the unbeliever to learn for himself that this work is true, that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom which Daniel prophesied God would set up in the latter days, never to be destroyed, a stone that would eventually fill the whole earth and stand forever (see Daniel 2:34-45, D&C 65:2). It is time for us, as members of the Church, to walk in all the ways of the Lord, to use our influence to make popular that which is sound and to make unpopular that which is unsound. We have the scriptures, the

prophets, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now we need eyes that will see, ears that will hear, and hearts that will hearken to God's direction.

The cleansing and Judgment

I testify that not many years hence the earth will be cleansed (see D&C 76:41). Jesus the Christ will come again, this time in power and great glory to vanquish His foes and to rule and reign on the earth (see D&C 43:26–33). In due time all men will gain a resurrection and then will face the Master in a final judgment (see 2 Nephi 9:15, 41). God will give rewards to each according to the deeds done in the flesh (see Alma 5:15).

I testify to you that a fulness of joy can only come through the atonement of Jesus Christ and by obedience to all of the laws and ordinances of the gospel, which are found only in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see Articles of Faith 1:3).

To all these things I humbly testify and bear my solemn witness that they are true, and I do so in the name of Him who is the head of this church, even Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Testimony."

Elder Devere Harris offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, furnished the choral numbers for the Saturday morning session of the conference.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the Salt Lake Tongan Choir, conducted by Sione T. Kinikini.

At the general priesthood session, music was furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus. Jerold Ottley

and Robert C. Bowden conducted the combined choir.

The Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and Sunday afternoon sessions.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by Robert Cundick, John Longhurst, and Clay Christiansen, Tabernacle organists.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the conference

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